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THE

SECRET

OF

THE CAVERN.

A NOVEL.

LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE

SECRET

OF

THE CAVERN.

A Novel.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

MRS. BURKE,

AUTHOR OF

THE SORROWS OF EDITH, ELLIOTT, &c.

With what unequal tempers are we fram'd.

ROWE.

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THE

SECRET OF THE CAVERN.

CHAP. I.

" A brave vessel
" Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
" Dash'd all to pieces! Oh, the cry did knock
" Against my very heart!"

ON the western coast of this island, where lofty cliffs extend for many miles, and the dwellings of a few poor shepherds and fishermen are scattered among the rocks, one stormy winter night, just as the weary inhabitants of this solitary scene

were retiring to their beds of straw, signals of a ship in distress were heard; a vessel struck upon the rocks, and the piercing shrieks of the sufferers were rendered doubly dreadful by the apparent impossibility of affording them any assistance. But, notwithstanding the danger that threatened them, many of the fishermen, who were accustomed to such scenes, risked their lives, to reach the vessel; some from the impulse of native humanity, but the greatest number from a rapacious thirst for gain.

An infant in its cradle was the only living creature found in the separating wreck; the crew, and all the passengers capable of exertion, having crowded into the boats belonging to the ship, and all perished! The helpless and deserted innocent was preserved by an aged fisherman, who was more desirous of saving life than of enriching himself with what might be snatched from the deep. The infant was wet through, and benumbed with cold; but

but the kind hearted old man wrapped it up in his great coat, conveyed it in safety to the shore, and, folding it carefully in his arms, hurried with it to his poor hut, where the partner of his life anxiously waited his return, and to her he committed his charge.

The innocence and beauty of the object, thus almost miraculously preserved, pleaded powerfully to the heart of the fisherman's wife; she took off its wet robes, tenderly chafed its little limbs before the fire, then wrapped it in clean though coarse linen, and laid it in her neat, but homely bed. The infant was a female, and appeared to be about six months old. She slept soundly during the remainder of the night, awoke smiling, took some nourishment, and sunk again into a balmy slumber, which lasted until a few moments before the fisherman returned home from labour, to his meal at noon. His wife, with the just awakened infant in her arms, then met him at the cottage-

door, with the usual welcome of affection, which never failed to cheer old Norman's heart after the greatest dangers and fatigues; and the genuine warmth and kindness of his nature glowed in his countenance, on beholding the smiling cherub that he had saved from impending death!—He took the child in his arms, kissed its dimpled cheeks, and fondly caressed her, while Alice, his wife, pointed out to him a coral necklace which the infant had on, to which was suspended a cross of emerald set in gold, and fastened to the necklace by a device in gold, representing two hearts pierced through with an arrow, and encircled by the words—"To part no more!" The clasp of the necklace was curiously wrought, to form the initials "I. L." and the honest cottagers observed it with attention and wonder.

"Alas, husband!" cried the old woman, "what can we do for this baby, who, for sartin, belongs to some great gentlefolks?

—for

—for look, here's beautiful robes!" spreading out the garments the child was found in.

"We will do our best for it," returned the old man; "and when you have washed the salt water out of the clothes, lay them carefully by, to produce, in case the child should be owned; and be sure take care not to lose the necklace."

Alice promised her husband to guard these treasures as she would her life; and taking the necklace off, she deposited it in her strong box, observing that it only hurt the child's neck, and a row of juniper berries would be of more service to help it to cut its teeth, and prevent the fear of having such a costly thing lost. Norman did not object to this precaution, and after finishing his humble meal, labour again summoned him away.

Health and good-humour soon distinguished the adopted child of the fisherman and his wife; and, united with the early promise of uncommon loveliness

and the powerful charm of infantine endearment, rendered her not only tenderly beloved by her preservers, but a favourite with all the inhabitants of the cliffs.

The fisherman and his wife were childless, and the infant they had saved and adopted, was considered by them as sent by Providence, to be the blessing and delight of their age. Old Norman laboured cheerfully for her support, while his wife Alice fondly cherished the child of their affection, who soon learned to lisp the names of her humble benefactors; and the lesson of gratitude was the first that Heaven impressed upon her mind.

The child had been two years under the protection of Norman and Alice, without being distinguished by any name but such as *pretty prattler*, *little stranger*, and such other appellations, as naturally arose from the affection borne her by the old couple, when Norman one day suggested the propriety of having her baptized, and ventured to express his wish that she might

might be called Alice. To this the old woman strongly objected.

"No doubt," she observed, "but the child had been christened before Providence committed her to their care—at least, she hoped she had, for it would cut her to the heart to suppose she was not born of Christian parents; but as to having her called by her name, she declared it was quite presumptuous, because she was sure the child was a lady born, as the fine robes in which she was found, plainly shewed."

Numerous were the debates on this subject; but before the matter was decided, an event happened that made a material change amongst the cottagers of the cliffs.

At the foot of a ridge of rocks, where the eye descended into a deep, romantic valley, an ancient Castle reared its lofty turrets, commanding a view of the cliffs, the neighbouring seaports, and an extensive and variegated landscape. This Castle

had long been deserted, and was falling fast to decay, when its owner, Lord of the adjacent lands, as far as the eye could reach, sent to prepare the Castle for his reception, and soon after arrived, to fix his residence there.

The surrounding peasantry flocked to offer their respects to the Lord of the Manor, born at the Castle, though estranged from it ever since his early youth. Among the rest, Norman and Alice, who had both been servants at the Castle in their youth, and married from thence, appeared at the gate with the child of their adoption, were admitted to the presence of the master of the mansion, and instantly recognised by him.

Sir William Warbert had received from nature a handsome, expressive face, and an elegant manly figure. There was an air of grandeur about him which inspired his beholders with respect; but some events in his life had tinctured his mind with sadness. His noble and commanding aspect appeared,

appeared, at times, a striking picture of melancholy; and a deep disgust toward general society, made his demeanour cold and distant, except toward those whose friendship he prized, in whose presence he forgot past disappointments, and shone forth in his native character, displaying those dignified and pleasing manners, and all those graces of conversation and deportment by which he had been so eminently distinguished in his happiest days.

Old Norman and Alice, emblems of honesty and humble worth, attracted the particular notice of Sir William; and the blooming child, who accompanied them, excited his curiosity. Norman simply related the circumstances that had placed her under their protection, and Sir William felt an interest which he did not immediately avow.

Some days after, as Sir William was walking over the cliffs, a storm suddenly arose. The rain began to pour in torrents, and he took shelter under a projecting

piece of rock, when old Norman passed by, laden with the produce of long and severe toil, and almost bending to the earth beneath the weight of years, and the force of the conflicting elements. His garments were wet through, his hat had been carried away by the wind, the rain beat upon his bald head, and his few silver locks hung down on either side of his furrowed cheeks.

"Alas!" said Sir William to himself, as Norman approached near to the spot, where he had taken shelter from the storm.

The old man proceeded slowly on, until hearing his name pronounced, he started, and distinguishing Sir William, he stopped, and bowed respectfully.

"Hasten home, old man," said Sir William, shivering, "and never let me see you out again in weather like this, with your bare head thus exposed, and drenched in wet."

"The wind took my hat away, your Honour," said Norman mildly.

"It's a shame to see age like your's out at all on such a day," resumed Sir William; "leave off braving the storms of life, and keep at home in your cottage."

"Alas, your Honour!" said Norman timidly, "I must labour, or not live. There's my poor old dame at home, and the little one to keep; and I had better die under my daily task, than see them want."

Sir William shook his head, and again bade the old man hasten home. He bowed, and obeyed; but no sooner had he changed his clothes, and seated himself by the cheerful fire that blazed upon the hearth of his lowly dwelling, than Sir William lifted up the latch of the door, and entered.

Alice was preparing their frugal meal, and the little girl was at play at her feet. Sir William gazed a moment at the child; then, turning to Norman, he expressed

a wish that he would never venture out again in such severe weather.

"Ah, bless your Honour!" cried Alice, dropping one of her best curtsies, as she took up her ladle to stir the broth, "poor folk, like us, mayn't mind weather. I can truly say, except by hurts got at wrecks, where he always was foremost to save lives, Norman has never lain by from work one day, only Sabbaths and Church holidays, since we left the service of our good old master, your Honour's father, which is seven-and-thirty years ago, come next Michaelmas eve; and then Norman was full forty years of age, and I but five years less."

"Your best days, then, were passed in my father's service," observed Sir William.

"They were golden days!" cried the old man, with a countenance animated by the delightful recollection of a well-spent youth; "for Alice and I were sweethearts all the twenty years we lived at the Castle together;

together; and the Castle was famous for hospitality and good fare: not but we have known many years of comfort in this poor hovel."

"Then I am sure it must have been comfort dependant on yourselves, and above the reach of the chances of Fortune."

"True, your Honour," cried Norman, while a grateful emotion animated his fine and venerable face. "While God blesses our honest endeavours, we set Fortune at defiance. If the tempest roars, and I labour hard and long, and come home empty-handed, my old woman meets me with a loving welcome, which revives my heart after the heaviest toil and disappointment; and Providence generally sends me double luck on the morrow. Ah, your Honour! it's a blessed thing to work for those we love!"

The eyes of Alice kindly met the affectionate glance of her husband as he concluded,

concluded, and the child hung fondly on his knees.

Sir William contemplated the scene with delight and admiration, and murmured to himself—"This is indeed luxury of the highest kind."—Compassion conducted him to Norman's cottage; but he found there more to envy than pity. It proved how much of real happiness may be found in the lowliest state; and Sir William returned home, concluding that the old fisherman in his clay-built hut, cheerfully attended, and constantly soothed under every hardship by the faithful partner of his heart and life, and looked up to with grateful affection, was the most enviable being he had ever known.

The tender attachment so evident in the old couple towards the child they had preserved, forcibly struck Sir William on the day when, soon after his arrival at the Castle, they appeared before him. From that hour he had felt a benevolent

wish to smooth the remainder of their days, to relieve Norman from the necessity of continual labour, and to be the friend of the aged pair and their adopted child. But after he had witnessed the contentment of their hearts, and the comforts of their dwelling, he became apprehensive lest, by attempting to change the habits of their lives, he might disturb their happiness, instead of procuring for them any addition to it;—he therefore resolved to watch for opportunities of befriending them, without immediately altering their condition; and he felt an interest so strong respecting the child of the cottager's adoption, that it engaged much of his thoughts, and drew him more and more frequently to Norman's dwelling.

When the sky lowered, and threatened a storm, Sir William never failed to hasten to the old fisherman's door, in time to prevent his exposing himself to the tempest's rage, overruling all the gentle arguments and earnest entreaties of Norman,

and,

and, in a variety of ways, making him ample amends for the loss of time.

Sir William Warbert was not one of those who entrust the benevolent purposes of their hearts to ignorant menials and mercenary dependants, or in the sacred cause of suffering humanity, give credit to the representation of low, unfeeling, interested minds, always influenced by their own gross prejudices or sordid views, extolling the unworthy, or depreciating the deserving, as best suits their purposes, and never, in any instance, to be relied upon. Where Sir William wished to serve, he employed his own observation and judgment, regardless of the encomiums of the designing, or the rancorous whispers of the malevolent. He made himself, by clear and direct means, acquainted with the real merits and situation of the objects of his notice, which ever after influenced his conduct toward them.

Every time Sir William visited the cottage of Norman, he became more delighted with

with the little girl, whose eagerness to please, and to obtain his notice, arose from the impression made on her by his goodness to her humble protectors, whom she fondly loved; and an uncommon sensibility of heart thus early displayed itself, and distinguished all her actions, giving grace to her attitudes, and an expression almost angelic to her countenance.

The propriety of giving the child a name, often occurred to Norman, and caused frequent debates between him and Alice, when at length they agreed to submit the decision to Sir William, who, rejecting the name of Alice (at the earnest entreaty of the old woman), declared their little favourite should be called after one of the most lovely women he had ever known, whose name was Clarinda.—"To which name," said Sir William, "I will add my own at her baptism, and stand her Godfather."

A few days after this determination, Norman

Norman and Alice, by Sir William's orders, conveyed the child to the Castle, where she was baptized Clarinda Warbert, which occasioned various surmises, much whispering, and some envy among their peasant neighbours; and some among them scrupled not to observe that old Norman knew well enough what he was about when he took charge of this child, and that the story of the shipwreck was only an invention.

Entitled to the name of father, Sir William evinced the tender regard of one towards the child he had thus distinguished. Every day she visited the Castle, passed the greatest portion of her time there, became Sir William's pupil and favourite companion, although the cottage of the fisherman was still her home, and the aged couple were loved and honoured as her parents; for Sir William carefully cherished the attachment implanted by gratitude in her heart, and she was early taught to understand her

real

real situation: and, consequently, as soon as reason dawned, she felt her obligations to those who, of their penury, had so tenderly afforded her protection and support.

A sense of justice had impelled Sir William, soon after his arrival at the Castle, to endeavour to trace the family and connections of the shipwrecked child, but without success. His increasing regard for her induced him to repeat those researches, but as fruitlessly as before; and Clarinda became each hour more endeared, and more endearing. In the dwelling of Norman and Alice, she had examples of piety, humility, and contentment. By Sir William she was taught a strict observance of every Christian duty and moral obligation; from him she hourly imbibed the purest lessons of wisdom and virtue; her fine understanding was assiduously cultivated, her heart improved, and her mind fortified; and she attained her fifteenth year with more solid learning than

than is possessed by many of our modern young men when they quit College, with which she united many of those accomplishments adapted to her sex, without any of that frivolity which is often the consequence of the general mode of female education.

She received lessons in the languages, geography, and history from Sir William, and was at all times the favoured companion of his studious hours. In forming the mind and manners of Clarinda, Sir William was assisted by a gentlewoman, reduced from affluence, who superintended his household. By her, Clarinda was instructed in most of the ornamental arts of modern education, and in others she was self-taught.

The early part of each day she devoted to the instructions of Sir William; she then sat down to her music under the tuition of Mrs. Willowby. At noon she hastened, like a wood-nymph, over the cliffs, to Norman and Alice, to whom she daily

daily read a portion of scripture, or some religious tract. She then often seated herself on the rocks, with her drawing utensils. Again she repaired to the Castle, generally in time to repeat her lessons to Sir William, to write out some selected part from a favourite author, and sometimes to read aloud, and work at her embroidery before the hour of dinner.

The latter part of each day was devoted to amusement and conversation. She accompanied Sir William in his walks, visited the neighbouring poor, and was the distributor of her benefactor's charities.

Thus passed the first years of Clarinda's life. Health bloomed upon her cheek, and happiness sparkled in her eye; and Sir William cherished a secret hope that his charming pupil would afford the world a bright example of female excellence.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

"When Adam is introduced by Milton, describing Eve in Paradise, and relating to the Angel the impressions he felt upon seeing her at her first creation, he does not represent her like a Grecian Venus, by her shape or features, but by the lustre of her mind, which shone in them, and gave to them their power of charming."

CLARINDA improved daily in the acquirements of her mind, the powers of her understanding, and the unstudied graces of her deportment. She was beautiful too; but her beauty was of that sort which affects the heart more than it immediately strikes the eye. Her face was the picture of her mind; it beamed with sense,

sense, animation, innocence, and good-humour.

Sixteen years had been numbered since Clarinda was snatched from the waves, twelve of which she had been an inhabitant of the Castle, and the companion of Sir William's solitude, who on the same day completed his fiftieth year.

Clarinda petitioned Sir William that his birthday might be celebrated at the Castle; and, after some persuasion, he yielded to her entreaty, to renew a custom he had long neglected.

Preparations were made, invitations dispersed; and when the festive day arrived, the Castle was crowded with guests. At the dawn of that day, Clarinda arose, with spirits light as air, to acquit herself of the charge received from Sir William, when they separated on the preceding night, and to perform a task in which she always experienced a high gratification;—this was, to distribute the birth-day offerings of Sir William's bounty among

among the neighbouring poor—a custom which had never been omitted.

Where helpless age, agonizing pain, pale sickness, or pining sorrow dwelt—where poverty's iron hand bowed down the spirit, or conscious error had nipped the opening bud of domestic comfort, Clarinda's approach was often hailed as the messenger of mercy, and the blessings of the afflicted followed her steps. As she turned toward the Castle, she stopped at a cottage of the superior kind, where a lovely woman, fallen from better days, mourned the loss of a beloved husband, whom adverse circumstances had precipitated into an early grave, and wept over the smiling pledge of their affection, while a worthy parent shared her griefs, and imbittered her destiny.

Here Clarinda had imagined to herself a painful task. It is the office of most exalted humanity to relieve those who, sunk from affluence to penury, have been refined by education, and taught to cherish ideas

ideas which aggravate the severity of their fate. Engrossed by these reflections, Clarinda reached the cottage in the wood, where she believed the inhabitants prepared for her reception; and gently tapping at the door, was conducted by a young rustic girl to her mistress. The afflicted widow, whose situation had before been made known to Sir William, excited commiseration, and consequently found relief, had, with an affectionate mother and an infant boy, been removed by the Baronet's compassion, from the cabin of one of the poor shepherds, who dwelt at the foot of the cliffs, and who had known them in their prosperous days, to the little house in the wood, where Clarinda was directed to find them by Mrs. Willowby, who, as the bearer of Sir William's bounty, had been their frequent visitor. It was the first time Clarinda had ever entered this cottage, though, from its windows, she had often been observed by

The old lady assisted to convey her daughter back to her apartment, while the child hung upon the knees of the gentleman, entreating him, with all the eloquence of artless innocence, to send death away from his dear mamma, as he used to do.

Mrs. Lenarvon began to recover, and her mother withdrew with the stranger into an adjoining room, from whence they soon returned, some explanations seeming to have taken place, which had changed the expression of anguish, before impressed upon the features of the gentleman, into a sort of placid melancholy. He embraced the child with affection, pressed Mrs. Lenarvon's hand with the chastened tenderness of the purest friendship; and bowing to Clarinda, with a look strongly expressive of admiration, he silently withdrew.

That curiosity so natural to young and ardent minds, was strongly excited in Clarinda's bosom. Mrs. Lenarvon saw it, and

and she felt it to be a sort of duty imposed by gratitude, to explain what must to her charming visitor appear so mysterious.

"The gentleman who has just left us," said she, addressing Clarinda, "was the school companion and early friend of my lamented husband. Mr. Lenarvon was once the master of large possessions; but a false friend, and an unjust steward, by their united machinations, soon brought him (who was all unsuspicious goodness) to destruction; and to aggravate our misfortunes, when they failed in their hopes of estranging my love from the wedded partner of my soul, they endeavoured, by every base contrivance, to rob me of my only blessing—my husband's confidence and attachment. But here, by the interference of the generous man you have just seen, they failed. He conducted my deceived Lenarvon back to the wife he was about to desert for ever, and who loved him beyond her own existence; but

to preserve his property from the power of these leagued harpies, it was too late. Repentance wrung his soul, and death approached to end his sorrows, and fill up the measure of mine. Too late he became sensible of the delusions that had undone him—too late he mourned their bitter consequences—he died! soliciting that forgiveness which from Heaven, I doubt not, he received, as certainly as he did from me. The fiends who had destroyed my husband, fell in upon our little remaining property. They produced their claims, which the laws admitted, and unrelentingly they robbed us of every thing. In vain our only earthly friend opposed their depredations; they laughed at his generous exertions; and with the malevolence natural to such minds, they attributed his zeal in our behalf to the most base motives—to a long-cherished attachment for me.

"After Mr. Lenarvon's death, our benefactor (for to that name he is well entitled)

entitled) continued his attentions to myself and child—attentions as generous as they were disinterested. But the whispering tongue of busy calumny caught the injurious tale which our malignant enemies had invented; it spread rapidly, and at length reached my ear. I started with indignation and horror at understanding in what a light I had been represented. I withdrew from the scene of my misfortunes; and leaving an explanatory letter for our traduced guardian friend, with the best of mothers, and my poor fatherless boy, I found a melancholy refuge in the hovel of an old shepherd, who dwells among the rocks, and who, in his youth, had been a servant in my father's house."

Tears fell over Mrs. Lenarvon's face, as she added—"How we came to this abode of comfort, you, Madam, are already acquainted with, as well as how we have been supported in it; and if the widow's prayers, the helpless infant's pre-

servation rise, as I believe, like grateful incense to the throne of God, there will the generosity of Sir William Warbert find a sure reward."

She paused, much affected; and her mother related the manner of their meeting on the cliffs their valued friend, described their mutual surprise, and the transports of the child, by whom he was instantly recognised.

These explanations prevented any unfavourable impressions, such as mysterious appearances are calculated to make; and Clarinda, feeling in her heart an affection rising towards Mrs. Lenarvon, her worthy mother, and the little boy, took her leave; and, full of reflections on the scene she had just quitted, she hastened homeward.

At the Castle gate Clarinda was met by Sir William, who waited impatiently for her appearance, and had wondered at her long delay.

"This day," said Sir William, as they entered

entered the Castle, "I intend you shall be the mistress of those festivities which, but to indulge your wish, would not have taken place."

Clarinda's timidity, cherished by her mode of life and education, took the alarm. She offered a little gentle opposition, but soon yielded to Sir William's request, and hastened to make preparations for the gala, and receive the birth-day guests. With her fair hair confined by bandeaus of pearl, and her fine form habited in an elegant vest of muslin sprigged with gold, the drapery of which was looped up with pearls, and her neck and arms encircled with rows of the same, Clarinda looked like a fair divinity; and numerous were the adorations directed to her, when the guests appeared: many who had disregarded the old fisherman's tale of the shipwrecked infant, beholding with delight and admiration the adopted child of the Lord of the Castle, the light in which she had long been considered.

The visitors most distinguished on this occasion by Sir William, were a Mr. O'Byron and his family. This gentleman had been a favourite companion of Sir William's youth; but from that period they had never met, until having purchased an estate in a neighbouring shire, the recollection of early days procured him and his family an invitation to the Castle.

Mr. O'Byron was once a man of great gallantry; but his attachment to a very lovely woman, whose hand he obtained, cured him of being a general admirer; and he became as remarkable for his domestic virtues, as he had been for his spirit and extravagance in the circles of fashionable life. He had three daughters, far from lovely in their persons, and still less amiable in the character of their minds, and one son, in whom his best hopes centered.

Albany O'Byron, this beloved son, was just then five-and-twenty. His under-

standing and attainments, though not remarkable, were equal to most young men of his age and rank, as he possessed a sort of superficial knowledge, which made him pass well enough in the world, and knew a little of every science, without thoroughly understanding any. His figure was tall, manly, and athletic without being elegant; his complexion fair and ruddy, and his tongue well suited to tell

"A whispering tale in a fair lady's ear."

With this family came an orphan girl, brought up from infancy under their protection, and destitute of any other friends, her father having been a natural son, who never knew his parents, but was provided for by a commission in the army; and her mother, who had been beautiful and virtuous, was of origin so humble, that no hope of assistance for their unprovided infant appeared from any quarter, until Mr. O'Byron, who had known and esteemed the father, and admired the

beauty and innocence of the mother, when a girl, stepped generously forward, and received the friendless child under the protection of his family.

Laura Montalbert grew up with the children of Mr. O'Byron, and shared with them the affectionate attentions of the parents. But when she began to give proofs of an uncommonly fine understanding, excelling in all those accomplishments in which she was instructed with the daughters of her benefactors, she became to them first an object of envy, and at length of hatred. This lovely but unfortunate girl resembled both her parents, without being so handsome as either of them had been. Her complexion was a clear and animated brunette; her hair, a dark auburn, flowed redundantly in ringlets highly ornamental; her eyes were black, and expressive of the character of her mind, beaming with the sensibility of her heart, or sparkling with the vivacity of

of her spirits, as she happened to be influenced.

But her natural sprightliness, which was excessive, was often checked by the painful sense of her dependant situation; and there were hours when the unkindness of her young female companions drew tears of anguish from her grateful and innocent heart; though the affection and goodness of the parents fortified her in a great measure against the little malicious artifices of the daughters.

The features of Laura were irregular yet pleasing; the expression of her countenance was peculiarly interesting; fine sense, sweetness of temper, and a feeling heart were the qualities impressed upon it in striking characters. Her figure was delicately formed, with the airy lightness of a Sylph, and the attitudes of a Grace.

Clarinda listened attentively to Laura's history, as related by Mr. O Byron to Sir William; and an attachment arose in her breast toward Laura, who, an orphan like

like herself, was much less happy, and whose uncommon understanding and captivating manners were so eminently calculated to soften the bitterest malevolence, to disarm envy, and conciliate affection.

Laura observed and felt the marked attentions of Clarinda, which, though highly gratifying, excited some painful sensations when she compared it with her cold and reserved behaviour to the Miss O'Byrons, by which they were evidently mortified, and Laura knew they would not fail to revenge themselves on her.

The rest of the company flowed in, and became numerous. Their entertainment was superb, gaiety animated every countenance, and Clarinda was the admiration of the whole party, and the brightest ornament of the festive scene.

Old Norman and Alice were invited to the Castle on this glad occasion, and, in the servants' hall, seemed to shake off the weight

weight of age and infirmity, to celebrate Sir William's natal day.

In the evening the company assembled in a temporary pavilion erected in the gardens, where the trees were hung with coloured lamps, and an elegant awning was gaily adorned by Clarinda's hands, with painted devices, and flowers tastefully disposed in a variety of forms, which delighted the eye, and perfumed the air.

Laura Montalbert seemed one of the happiest of the happy group. Before the company were all assembled, she assisted Clarinda to arrange the flowers in the pavilion, and with banquets in their hands, and wreaths and festoons on their arms, they were busily employed, accompanied by Albany O'Byron, until the appearance of Sir William reminded them that their presence was required in the drawing-room.

After a sumptuous entertainment, Clarinda and Albany O'Byron were summoned by Sir William to open the ball, while

while he paid to the engaging Laura the marked compliment of selecting her for his partner to go down one dance, when he resigned her hand to a gentleman who had engaged it before; and retired to a sort of inner pavilion with the elder part of the company.

The night was far advanced when Clarinda thought she observed a distant waving as of some object gliding among the trees. A few moments after, she beheld a figure pass in shadow behind one of the pillars. She followed it steadily with her eye, and saw it lean against the trunk of an old tree, at the entrance of a dark recess, at no great distance from the pavilion. She embraced an opportunity to whisper this circumstance to Laura; and while the gentlemen were busied, some in consulting about a new dance, and others in offering refreshments to their partners, Clarinda and Laura ran, arm in arm, toward the spot, where the object which had excited their curiosity, remained

remained motionless; when, drawing near, Clarinda, to her astonishment, distinguished the features of the gentleman whom she had seen in the morning at the cottage in the wood.

Their light footsteps had almost reached the spot where he stood, before he was sensible of their approach, when, starting from his reverie, he raised his dark and piercing eye and fixed them stedfastly on Clarinda's face. She stopped involuntarily; then pressing Laura's arm closer than before, she turned suddenly, and they ran back to the pavilion, surprised and alarmed, while Laura enquired if the person was known to Clarinda; and the latter replying she had seen him once before, felt herself wholly at a loss to account for his intrusion.

On re-entering the ball-room, the dancing recommenced, and was continued with additional spirit until they were summoned to the supper room. There an elegant repast awaited them, and a band of music

music played in an adjoining apartment. About midnight the young party returned to the ball room; nor could they be prevailed upon to separate till the morning dawned.

By the hour of noon, the visitors were all again assembled, when taking leave of Sir William and Clarinda, they hastened to their respective homes, all except Mr. O'Byron and his family, who, at Sir William's earnest entreaty, consented to remain some days at the Castle.

Mr. O'Byron was sensible, entertaining, and good-humoured. His heart was full of benevolence, he was a kind and generous benefactor, a fond attentive husband, and a father whose care and affection knew no bounds. His Lady was all that the heart of man could wish for; she was elegant in person, virtuous, amiable, and endearing; and mutual attachment was the motive and bond of their union. Their only son and favourite child, Albany O'Byron, has been already described.

described. Their daughters differed widely from the rest of their family, and accorded ill with each other. The eldest was tall, awkward, and ill formed, with a vulgar, disgusting countenance, and a mean understanding, with which were united great haughtiness of mind and arrogance of manner, with a temper sullen and perverse. The second sister was fair and florid, with a simpering unmeaning countenance, a deformed person, more understanding than her elder sister, and worse dispositions. The youngest, a girl, about fifteen, was as tall and awkward as her elder sister, and as fair and florid as the second, vain, volatile, and petulant destitute of talents herself, and despising those who possessed them. Laura was the constant butt of her malice, and the notice of the other sex, her only ambition—an object in which she was generally disappointed.

These three sisters, for whom the amiable parents often shed in secret the tear of

of bitter mortification, and felt severely humbled, agreed only in one point, to torment and depreciate Laura Montalbert, who would have sunk into dejection from their united malignity, had she not always a sure refuge in the justice and affection of Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron, who jointly opposed the ungenerous conduct of their daughters, and were very sensible of Laura's superior merit.

At the Castle, Laura experienced the most kind attention from Sir William, which her dependant situation alone would have claimed, but which her talents and engaging disposition gave her a stronger title to; and the distinction of Sir William's favour, together with the proof she received of Clarinda's regard, gave to Laura additional spirits, and called forth all her powers of pleasing.

She sang with a sweetness and taste that stole with irresistible charm from the ear to the heart, and was only rivalled by Clarinda in that respect; but the voice of the

the latter was nearly as melodious, and much more powerful; and she touched the several instruments on which Laura performed, with equal skill. But their display of talents, and the emulation naturally excited, instead of raising in their bosoms envious emotions, seemed to unite their minds in friendship, which Clarinda seized every opportunity of expressing in the presence of the Miss O'Byrons, as she saw it wounded their pride to see such attention paid to one they regarded so little; and Clarinda thought their unkindness to an orphan girl, bred with them as a sister, entitled to their affection by her endearing temper, which delighted to serve and oblige, and whose fault, in their eyes, could only be that of superior excellence, deserved mortification.

Laura was formed for social happiness; and when relieved from the persecutions of the Miss O'Byrons, she was the most joyous of human beings. There was an airy

airy lightness in her step and motion, and a graceful animation in her natural manner peculiarly charming, although she had none of the dignity that distinguished Clarinda, nor was her face half so beautiful. With her sweet shepherdess of the rocks, as she often termed Clarinda, she daily visited the dwelling of old Norman and Alice, and gained their love by her engaging manners; with her fair friend she likewise went repeatedly to the cottage in the wood, became acquainted with Mrs. Lenarvon and her mother, and particularly attached herself to the little boy.

At length the dreaded hour of separation came—Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron could not prolong their visit. Albany had found charms at the Castle that made him quit it with regret, and Laura pressed Sir William's hand to her grateful and innocent heart, and wept passionately in Clarinda's bosom. How natural is it with such minds

minds as her's, to feel a warm affection for those who espouse their cause against the wrongs of enmity, and generously distinguish them under circumstances of misfortune!

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

" The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
" It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
" Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed—
" It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
It becomes
" The throned Monarch better than his crown."

AFTER the departure of Mr. O'Byron's family, the Castle of the Rocks again became a solitude, enlivened only by the cheerfulness of Clarinda, who beguiled Sir William of many an obtruding melancholy thought, and returned his parental care and tenderness with a constant flow of grateful

grateful love, as delightful to herself, as it was soothing to her benefactor.

Taken from penury and obscurity, where, though humble worth would cheerfully have laboured to procure for her the common support of nature, she might have sighed in vain for those opportunities of improving her mind, which had been afforded her under Sir William's protection, and of which she had so happily availed herself, it would be saying little to declare that toward such a friend her heart beat with affection as to a father—perhaps she felt more, as on a parent she would have had a natural claim; but the generosity of him who had opened his door to the helpless stranger, and received into his bosom the destitute child, kindled in Clarinda's heart those abundant returns of gratitude, which only minds like her's can feel or imagine.

How blessed are the merciful even in this life! How great the privilege of being empowered to shield a worthy object

from threatening evil, of being looked up to as Heaven's messenger of pity and consolation, and of reading the overflowing emotions of the heart so relieved, in the expressive eye, the ingenuous countenance, and all those indescribable and delicate attentions which a thankful spirit delights in offering!

The protection which compassion for distressed innocence first induced Sir William to bestow, was rendered a source of self-approbation and the purest delight, by the amiable and excellent qualities of the object of his benevolent regard, who, though in her infant state marked by misfortune, had been the care of Providence, as she was the favourite of Nature.

Whenever sadness overclouded Sir William's mind, Clarinda gently soothed or sweetly cheered him; if indisposition attacked him, she was his best nurse and watchful attendant, eager to render him good offices, and proud to have her little services accepted.

Clarinda's beauty and deportment had, on Sir William's birthday, made an impression on some who would have blushed at the honourable avowal of their passion, had she not been generally considered as the adopted child of her benefactor, and perhaps the future heiress of his fortune. Considered in that light, and the attachment which Sir William proved he felt for her, attributed to some mysterious cause, several candidates appeared in contest for the honour of her heart and hand. But not one of them could obtain the fair prize, though one was an Earl, another a Baron, and a third one of the wealthiest Commoners in the kingdom. The first was young, well-made, and with a fair, effeminate face, that some called handsome; but he was weak in understanding, and profligate in manners. The second was some years older, as professed a libertine as the former, entertaining in conversation, but abandoned in principles, and ruined in his fortune. The other

was far advanced in life, of a bloated figure and stupid aspect, whose highest ideas of happiness centered in a full purse and a sumptuous table, and who was therefore easily consoled for his disappointment in wishing to share these blessings with the lovely Clarinda, by the good cheer and hearty welcome afforded him by Sir William; while his appearance and manner at dinner forcibly reminded Clarinda of these lines of Cowper—

"Gorgonius sits abdominous and wan,
"Like a fat squab upon a Chinese fan;
"He snuffs far off th' anticipated joy—
"Turtle and ven'son all his thoughts employ."

These rival suitors soon withdrew themselves after receiving a refusal from the fair maid of the Castle, who had Sir William's permission to act on all such occasions as the dictates of her heart prompted.

Albany

Albany O'Byron was a frequent visitor at the Castle, and equally welcome to its master and Clarinda; the former of whom regarded him for his worthy father's sake, and the latter was naturally pleased with those attentions so peculiarly gratifying to female youth, and which she attributed merely to friendship, and consequently felt quite at ease, and unrestrained in his society; and an apparent conformity of taste on many points, made her every hour more pleased with him, as he seemed to find peculiar delight in those objects and pursuits to which Clarinda was attached.

The structure of the Castle, its romantic situation, and the landscape around it, he professed his admiration of, and dwelt minutely on the costly magnificence of its furniture and adornments, declaring that they inspired his mind with high ideas of the wealth and grandeur of former times.

The lofty canopies, ornamented with gilded carved work and curious paintings—the damask curtains enriched with gold and silver—the tapestry hangings, where time had nearly defaced the story which industry had wrought—the highly-polished and inlaid floors and painted ceilings of many of the apartments—and the family portraits, many of them, together with a fine gallery of paintings, done by masters whose genius has immortalized their names, all attracted the notice of Albany, whose observations were highly pleasing to Clarinda, who felt an attachment to the Castle herself, and was favourably disposed towards every body who professed to be delighted with it.

But the wild scenery around the Castle was what most charmed Clarinda, and Albany displayed the same taste. Together they climbed the summits of the highest cliffs, saw the ocean foam, and heard it roar beneath

beneath their feet; and sometimes while the tempest exhausted its fury around them, sheltered in some cavern among the cliffs, or often under a projecting rock, they contemplated the wonders of his works, who

"Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm."

CHAP. IV.

" Then would she say, submissive at thy feet,
" While gratitude and love made service sweet,
" Serving a benefactor I am free,
" At my best home, if not exiled from thee."

LONG had the Castle been the home of Clarinda, but still she was a daily visitor at the cottage of her first beloved friends, Norman and Alice, who, quite incapable of labour, were entirely supported by Sir William's bounty, whose humane solicitude to render their age more comfortable, had induced him to propose their removal to the Castle, which they

they had with gratitude declined, professing their attachment to their long-accustomed hut. Thither too, Albany O'Byron, when at the Castle, frequently accompanied Clarinda, shewing an attention so flattering to the old couple, as was equally gratifying to them and to Clarinda, by whose introduction, and as the highest proof of her confidence in him, he likewise became acquainted at the cottage in the wood, and united with his lovely conductress in admiring the interesting Mrs. Lenarvon, who, although continuing to derive her chief means of support from Sir William's bounteous hand, had never seen her benefactor, who studiously avoided an interview with her, lest it should too painfully affect him, and too powerfully call forth the feelings of such a character as Clarinda had described her to be; the least of whose sorrows, that of want alone, he had been able to relieve, but who still mourned misfortunes irremediable, and such as the utmost effort of human kindness cannot

always cure. Time, however, the frequent society of Clarinda, the protection of a peaceful home, the arguments of her affectionate mother, and, above all, the powerful consolations of religion, did much to soften Mrs. Lenarvon's affliction; and an event happened at the Castle, which, though distressing in itself, produced a happy change in her situation.

Mrs. Willowby, the housekeeper at the Castle, considered by Sir William as a confidential friend, in whom unbounded trust had been reposed, by whose tuition Clarinda had so highly profited, and for whom, in return, she had experienced a sincere regard, had failed in her integrity, and given proofs of a most base and designing, as well as corrupt and mercenary mind. Whilst professing the tenderest affection for Clarinda, she had long and secretly laboured to weaken her influence with her benefactor, and even to deprive the innocent and lovely girl wholly of his favour, by making him believe her

her unworthy of its continuance, all of which she endeavoured to effect by a deep-laid plan of wicked artifice, which in its exposure fully proved her cruel perfidy and ingratitude, and exalted the unoffending Clarinda, whose ruin she had meditated.

She had procured secret accusations to be made against Clarinda, for a crime of which she herself was guilty. This was having embezzled a part of those sums which Sir William appropriated to charitable purposes. But the servant who was bribed by Mrs. Willowby to assist in this iniquitous design, was stung with compunction. One discovery led to others, the whole truth stood revealed, the base woman shrunk from the eye of that goodness she had abused, and of that unspotted innocence she had studied to blacken; she fled from the scene where her adversity had found refuge, her age repose and comfort, and where she might have continued with honour, and closed the last

days of her life in peace; and although Sir William traced her retreat, and with a generosity truly his own, secretly made her an allowance which secured her age from want, he saw her no more; and the disclosure of her treachery proved Clarinda to have added frequently to Sir William's donations, out of what was allowed her for pocket-money, instead of diminishing the gifts of his charity, as had been represented, and robbing the portion allotted for the relief of the distressed.

This was an event severely felt by Sir William and Clarinda; for the former had a great reliance on the probity of Mrs. Willowby, and the latter, from her earliest recollection, had loved and honoured her as a mother. Disappointments of this nature weaken the bond of social confidence, and sometimes plant future suspicion in the best of minds. Sir William declared that his had been a life full of such disappointments; but to Clarinda it

was

was a distress unfelt before, and she could not avoid regretting the loss of Mrs. Willowby, accustomed to her society as she had been, and indebted to her for many an useful instruction, many an elegant attainment.

The household of Sir William soon began to want a domestic superintendent, whose years and experience better qualified her for that office than Clarinda could possibly be; and as a person well qualified to fill that situation, Clarinda pointed out to Sir William the mother of Mrs. Lenarvon—a woman who had lived in a respectable station in life, and possessed every desirable requisite.

"How gratifying will it be to her," cried Clarinda, "to serve a benefactor to whom she owes so much!"

"There's my objection," observed Sir William. "Such a proposal to her might seem like claiming a return for the services you allude to; besides, I know not the merits of the person in question. To be unhappy,

unhappy, is enough to claim compassion; but of those whom we receive into our confidence, and fix in an important place of trust, we ought to know more as to dispositions and morals; and your youth, your open and artless nature are not competent to judge in such a case. I wish to find one qualified to ensure your respect, to engage your affection, and secure your confidence; her conduct should be your example, and her society should afford you pleasure blended with improvement."

"I already honour and love Mrs. Millbrook," said Clarinda; "and when you, my dear Sir, know her, you will do the same; she is pious, humane, meek, and affectionate; she has suffered much, and her mild and unassuming virtues are such as have often made me wish for a female friend like her, always near me; she is the best of mothers."

"And a good mother cannot be a bad woman," observed Sir William, pleased

pleased with the warmth with which Clarinda recommended the unfortunate stranger to his notice. "I will see this person," he added, "at any time my Clarinda wishes. You can bring her here."

"Or will you, dearest Sir," cried Clarinda, thankfully pressing Sir William's hand—"will you go with me to the wood? I have promised to try if I could prevail on you to go there a long time. Mrs. Lenarvon's spirits are now much restored, and I have guarded her against saying a word about your goodness to them;—so you need not fear that; and there you will see them without preparation, just as they always are."

Sir William's smile was an acquiescence well understood. Clarinda ran for her bonnet and cloak, and they soon reached the house in the wood, where Mrs. Millbrook and the little boy met them at the door.

Mrs.

Mrs. Millbrook turned pale at sight of Sir William, who instantly recognised the face of an old acquaintance; for she was of a family well known to Sir William in his early youth, and much respected by him, although some circumstances had long estranged him from them; and he was therefore unacquainted with the particulars of Mrs. Millbrook's life, never having seen her since she was a young and blooming girl in her father's house.

Selina Wooderville (the maiden name of Mrs. Millbrook) in her early youth had formed a secret passion for the handsome and engaging William Warbert. This passion, returned only by that transient admiration which characters like his feel in general for the young and beautiful of the female sex, was never suspected by its object. A soft dejection hung for some years upon Selina's spirits; but absence, and the addresses of an amiable lover subdued the secret inclination that so long lurked

lurked in her heart, and she gave her hand to Mr. Millbrook, a man of considerable merit; but, credulous, and open to deception, frequently the dupe of the designing, and at length a prey to villany, being ruined in his fortune, he died of a broken heart, leaving his widow with two children, quite destitute.

Sir William, whose acquaintance in the family of Mrs. Millbrook's father, was but of short duration, and whose mind about that time became interested by events highly important to him, knew not of Mrs. Millbrook's marriage, nor its unhappy consequences, until he met her at the threshold of the house in the wood. But well did Mrs. Millbrook know previous to that *rencontre*, that the first man her virgin heart distinguished, was the same by whom, in her decline of life, she was preserved from want, together with her unhappy daughter and child. Often had she observed to Clarinda that fate had destined her to love and honour

Sir

Sir William Warbert beyond all other men, without explaining all her reasons for that observation; and delicacy withheld her from making known to Sir William the acquaintance of their youth, lest it should seem like an additional claim upon his generosity. Mrs. Lenarvon had likewise been ignorant of that circumstance, when gratitude had taught her to wish that Clarinda might prevail on him to visit the refuge his humanity had afforded them.

The surprise therefore was great when Sir William reached the door; and in the care-worn features, pale complexion, and altered form of Mrs. Millbrook, traced the faint resemblance of the once beautiful and blooming Selina Wooderville.

The father of Mrs. Millbrook, a merchant, and of considerable property, lost his whole fortune in an adverse hour by one of those unavoidable mischances to which the sons of Commerce are peculiarly exposed; and having first risen in the world

world by his own industry and success, his daughter had few relations able to befriend her in the hour of adversity; nor in this repect in the family connections of her husband, was she more fortunate: for many of them wanted the ability, and those who possessed the power, had no inclination to serve, but attributed to imprudence those misfortunes which eloquently spoke to every unprejudiced and humane mind; and the distresses both of her and her daughter, had found from strangers that commiserating aid which was denied them from the nearest ties of blood.

When the expressive eye of Sir William claimed acquaintance with Mrs. Millbrook, as they met at the door of the cottage, she wished to avoid their penetrating and enquiring glance; and when he recollected those features he had so often gazed on with pleasure, in the bloom of life, an emotion of surprise and pleasure animated his countenance on discovering an early friend,

friend, where he only expected to meet an object of compassion.

Mrs. Millbrook and her daughter were really all that Clarinda had so warmly described. Sir William's presence was frequent at the house in the wood. The want of a female manager at the Castle was disclosed; the offer made to Mrs. Millbrook, by whom it was joyfully accepted, happy in the prospect of devoting the remainder of her days to the service of the man she most esteemed, and the benefactor to whom she stood so highly indebted.

Mrs. Lenarvon, whose health and spirits were sufficiently re-established to conduct the domestic business of her family, and attend to the care and improvement of her little son, was presented by Sir William with the cottage as her own, during the remainder of her life, together with several acres of land, with stock, adjoining to the house, the produce of which was amply sufficient to supply the necessities of life; and

and Sir William liberally added to it an allowance to procure those other conveniences suited to her sex and former station.

After this arrangement, so highly gratifying to Clarinda, Albany O'Byron, who had been some weeks absent from the Castle, again appeared, to remind Sir William of his promise of visiting, with Clarinda, his father's retreat. Clarinda warmly seconded his importunity; she tenderly regarded Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron, and, above all, she sighed for the delightful society of Laura Montalbert; and she learned from Albany, while preparations were making for their journey to his father's seat, a circumstance she was before unacquainted with, that Laura was under a solemn engagement of marriage to a young naval officer, who had greatly distinguished himself by his valour, and being promoted to a rank of considerable honour and profit, was hourly expected

to

to claim his best reward—the plighted hand of his charming Laura.

This was a welcome piece of intelligence to Sir William and Clarinda, who equally rejoiced in the good fortune which they hoped was in store for Laura, as they pitied as much as they loved her, and wished to see her raised from that state of dependance which envy and malignity rendered so painful, and almost insupportable; and they rejoiced at the prospect of her being honourably established with a deserving character, whose choice of her, a poor orphan girl, was a sure proof of the disinterested nature of his attachment, and the best earnest of future happiness.

Clarinda became more impatient every hour again to behold her favourite Laura; and while she assisted Mrs. Millbrook in making ready for their visit to Claverton Hall, her mind was busied in sketching prospects of felicity in store for Laura, in which

which she promised herself the generous pleasure of that participation which friendship always claims.

During the lapse of several days that Albany remained at the Castle, he often prevailed on Clarinda to wander with him over the craggy heights of the romantic cliffs. Each day they visited Norman and Alice, and received the benediction of their hearts. In their way, they always stopped at the house in the wood, which Mrs. Lenarvon had decorated anew with a degree of elegant simplicity, according with the character of her mind; then would they reascend the rocks, where the sea birds build their nests on the rugged promontories' topmost pinnacle, watch the last rays of the setting sun, as it appeared to sink into the ocean, and sometimes pursue their walks by moonlight to the farthest extremities of the cliffs.

CHAP. V.

" Not poppy, nor mandragosa,
" Nor all the drowsy syrups in the world,
" Shall ever med'cine thee to that sweet sleep
" Which thou ownest yesterday."

AFTER two days slow travelling, about the middle of a fine autumnal season, when all creation seemed to rejoice around them, and Nature poured her rich rewards into the lap of industry, Sir William, Clarinda, and Albany arrived at Claverton Hall, the residence of Mr. O'Byron, a spacious mansion, standing on a wide extended plain, with avenues of forest trees opening

opening on every side. Although the situation of this seat was not so romantic as that of the Castle of the Cliffs, nor the landscape around it so delightfully picturesque, yet the building was in the best style of modern architecture, and the gardens and grounds around it laid out with much taste, and at a great expence.

Laura, whose heart bounded with gladness at again beholding Sir William and Clarinda, flew to welcome them, while her animated air and manner were strikingly contrasted by the cold formality of the Miss O'Byrons. During the conversation of the evening, the expected lover was mentioned, and the deep blush of maiden modesty died the cheeks of Laura; and she listened in silent confusion while Mr. O'Byron described him as uniting all the virtues that can adorn a private station, with all those brilliant qualities which stamp the hero.

The presence of Clarinda seemed to give Laura new life. She led her to all her favourite haunts, shewed her the deep recesses, and the shady labyrinths she was accustomed to frequent with Albany, and which they had laboured together to improve and adorn. In an alcove, shaded by jasmine and honeysuckle interwoven with wild roses and sweetbriar, she touched her harp, and sang o'er again the airs to which Albany was most partial. There too, when one day there with Clarinda only, she wept in agony, as her friend alluded to the glowing description given by Mr. O'Byron, of her generous and heroic lover. The violent emotion, and the flood of tears which Laura seemed unable to repress, greatly surprised Clarinda; she could understand that sensibility might drop a tear even on occasions of joy, but here it seemed the burst of uncontroulable anguish, and not merely the overflowing of a feeling heart.

As

As Clarinda was one of the happiest of human beings, her delightful good-humour and vivacity appeared to communicate pleasure to all around her, and even the Miss O'Byron's seemed to become each hour more delighted with her society, and in her presence were less unkind to Laura, whose expected nuptials had excited in their breasts violent emotions of envy, as neither of them had ever been the object of any man's choice.

The visit of Sir William Warbert and his fair charge to Claverton Hall, made it a scene of festive hospitality. Clarinda's steps were followed by a crowd of admirers, and her ears assailed by many a warm and tender profession, all equally disregarded by her. On some of these occasions, when Clarinda was surrounded by adulation, Albany O'Byron appeared gloomy, and watchful apprehension marked his air and manner; but when Clarinda turned with disgust from the flatteries addressed to her, his looks cleared up, and brightened

into gaiety and ease. Sir William was particularly struck with the behaviour of Albany, and Laura observed him with a penetrating eye.

Several letters quickly succeeded each other from the ardent lover of Laura, and he soon after arrived at the Hall.

Sidney Athol was in person rather striking than handsome; he had a manly well-formed figure, with a face strongly expressive of his character, beaming with a high spirit and an undaunted temper. He was intrepid, generous, and humane, with strong sense, a warm open temper, and a rough bluntness of manner, that often gave offence in the polished circles of high life. His age was twenty-four, his birth noble, and he retained through life the impression of the particular attachment which in his boyish days he had borne to Laura's father. This early affection for a man, as worthy as he was unfortunate, first made Captain Athol distinguish the daughter, when an occurrence of

of chance discovered her to him under the protection of Mr. O'Byron's family; and what at first was no more than a grateful recollection of her father's friendship for him in boyhood, soon ripened, on a farther acquaintance, into the most fervent love.

Young Athol, on his first introduction to the family of Mr. O'Byron, had occasioned much secret rivalry between the three sisters, whose chagrin may be easily imagined, when his heart became the unsought-for prize of the poor orphan girl, who, as she was often reminded, was supported by their father's charity.

As Captain Athol drew near to Claverton Hall, and was passing by the border of the lake, where he had often conversed with the object of his love, he stopped his horse, to survey a scene which was particularly distinguished by Laura, when, as the moonbeams trembled on the waters of the lake, glittering through some willows on the opposite bank, he observed

two persons seated on a bench beneath the drooping branches; and directing his course to the spot, found Laura in deep conversation with Clarinda. The sound of the horse's feet made the ladies look toward them, and the next moment Laura was enfolded in her lover's arms, who fondly pressed her to his honest heart; nor was he sensible of the presence of a third person, until Laura, disengaging herself, introduced him and her fair companion to each other.

By Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron, Sidney Athol was particularly regarded, and always cordially welcomed; while their daughters received him with constrained civility—a striking contrast to the warm and lively esteem which Albany professed toward him.

As Sir William and Clarinda were prepossessed in favour of Laura's gallant lover before they beheld him, the favourable impression made on them by his general

general character, grew from acquaintance, into a sincere friendship.

Every thing was arranged preparatory for the nuptials of this gentleman and Laura, when, toward the conclusion of the day preceding that named for their union, Mr. O'Byron and Sir William, observing Laura thoughtful, absent, and often agitated in her manner, recommended to the young people a dance by moonlight, on the level green in the front of the house. This proposal was cheerfully complied with. Sidney Athol, as a stranger, was complimented with Clarinda's hand, and Albany said gaily he then must be content with that of Laura, who blushed deeply, and a tear stood trembling in her eye, while her lover darted at her an expressive glance, and regarded her partner with evident uneasiness.

A summons to supper put an end to the amusements of the evening. Three gentlemen from a neighbouring country

seat, and who had been the partners of the Miss O'Byrons in the dance, and were frequent visitors at the Hall, remained there to a late hour; and immediately after they were gone, the family party arose to separate.

Perplexity and sadness marked the countenance of Laura as she pronounced the adieus for the night; and when her lover pressed her hands tenderly to his bosom, as he led her to the door of the drawing-room, she turned from him, pale and disordered, and in an agitated voice bade him a good night. Her looks and manner during the day had been observed with surprise by Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron; and hoping to discover the cause of her uneasiness, after the rest of the family were retired to their apartments, Mrs. O'Byron visited that of Laura: but to her extreme astonishment, found her not there. She then descended a flight of steps, which led to a flower-garden and shrubbery behind the house, where she knew

knew Laura often walked by moonlight; and there she found her in a shady recess on her knees, with her face concealed between her clasped hands. On hearing her name pronounced by Mrs. O'Byron, she started from that posture, and approaching her benefactress, her second mother, she pressed her extended hand to her heart and to her lips, and wept passionately.

Grieved and embarrassed, Mrs. O'Byron gently enquired what it was that made her thus unhappy, at a time when she had not doubted but joy and gratitude wholly possessed her heart. It was many minutes before Laura could sufficiently recover herself to speak; and at length she told Mrs. O'Byron that she could not feel herself so near quitting that place, and all the objects it contained, so endeared to her heart, without great pain. She then implored her forgiveness, and dwelt on her obligations and attachment to the family, till Mrs. O'Byron reminded her it

was time for them both to think of securing a few hours of repose; and hastening into the house, Laura promised she would soon follow her.

The next morning, Clarinda, who generally arose with the lark, slept later than usual; but on entering the breakfast-room, she found it empty, and concluded that, except the servants, she was still the earliest riser in the house. She sat down to a harpsichord, and played a morning hymn. Her heart was lifted up with love and gratitude to the Eternal Source of all Good, and a glow of pure devotion animated her lovely countenance. She went to the window of the apartment, which looked into the garden, and distinguished Mrs. O'Byron with her son, walking hastily through a shaded alley at some distance. The next moment Captain Athol entered the room, with wild distraction in his air and looks.

"Where is Laura?" he eagerly enquired.

"I

"I believe she is not yet arisen," replied the astonished Clarinda.

"She is gone!" he exclaimed—"she is stolen—she is lost for ever!"

Clarinda stood motionless as a statue, scarcely believing herself awake. The whole family the next minute crowded around them, and proved what had fallen from the lips of the distracted Athol, not to be the illusion of a dream, for Laura could indeed nowhere be found.

Mrs. O'Byron, on whose mind the scene in the garden, on the preceding night, had left a deep impression, as soon as she was up, went to Laura's chamber, intending to have some more conversation with her, and therefore was the first to discover her absence; and after exploring many of her favourite walks, she flew to the chamber of Albany, who was in a deep sleep. When roused by the voice of his mother, and informed of her fruitless search after Laura, he testified extreme surprise and alarm, and soon following

Mrs. O'Byron into the grounds near the house, together they traced each recess and avenue frequented by Laura, without being able to gain the least intelligence of her; and on their return, they met Athol, who, on understanding the cause of their uneasiness, flew to the banks of the lake, where he had so often wandered with her, and sought her through every scene where it was likely she could be found. Almost in despair, they hastened to Clarinda; with whom their only hope centered; and on the failure of that hope, the distress of Athol arose almost to madness! Long had he wished for the arrival of that day, which he had doubted not would secure to him the blessing of his loved Laura's hand; and all it brought, was the cruellest disappointment, and the most racking apprehensions!

The appearance of Laura's chamber, when Mrs. O'Byron first entered it in the morning, created an immediate alarm, as the bed had evidently not been slept in,

nor was there an article displaced in her drawers or on her toilet, since she had arranged her dress for the dance on the preceding evening.

"Perhaps," observed Miss O'Byron with an affected air of concern, "the poor thing may have fallen into the lake or the fish-pond, as she was always so fond of picturesque scenery by moonlight, and night-walking."

"Or she may have been waylaid and murdered!" cried Miss Lucy, the second sister, "or had some secret passion, which perhaps made her so melancholy at times, and so, ashamed to own it,"—(here she glanced a malignant sneer at Athol)—"she is gone off in this shocking way!"

Mr. O'Byron bit his lips, and looked indignantly at his two elder daughters; his Lady became more pale than before. Captain Athol started up with a vehemence of action, strongly expressive of what he felt, and walked disorderly out of the room. Albany followed him in

visible agitation, Clarinda trembled and wept; and Sir William, though he partook of the distress caused by this alarming event, endeavoured to soften its effect.

"Poor dear Laura," cried Frances, the youngest Miss O'Byron, "I am really terrified about her! I saw she was extremely jealous of our charming Clarinda last night, because she danced with her lover, and looked so much handsomer than she ever could have fancied she was herself, with all her vanity; and so, perhaps, she has made away with herself in a fit of jealousy."

"To be sure, she never could bear to be outshone," observed Lucy.

"And seldom was, I believe," remarked Sir William.

"She was proud enough of her little talents, and quite spoiled by people's foolish flattery," said Margaret, the eldest, stung by Sir William's words, and pointed manner.

"Well,

"Well, I always said she would suffer for such folly," rejoined the malicious Lucy; "I never could find out what charms she possessed more than other people. Sure, she could not be called handsome! She has certainly fine eyes, and that is all."

"Fie! fie!" was pronounced by Mr. O'Byron in a tone of such marked displeasure, as imposed silence on his daughters, whose chagrin was considerably increased by Sir William's adding—

"Be assured, ladies, whatever may be your opinion of Laura, with our sex she could not fail of being an object of general attention; and when I think of her good sense, her uncommon talents, her charming temper, and sensibility, together with the enchanting graces of her conversation and manners, so much am I her admirer, that even Captain Athol cannot be much more grieved at her loss than I am; for Laura was one of those whose

whose society I hoped would bless the evening of my life."

Silence prevailed, envy hung its head, and bitter sarcasm stood abashed. Clarinda gratefully pressed Sir William's hand, and endeavoured to console Mrs. O'Byron, who sat dejectedly, scarcely sensible of what was passing.

Mr. O'Byron then recovering himself, went with Sir William in quest of Albany and the unhappy Athol, and found them with all the men-servants, dragging the lake and the fish-pond. After which, they collected all the villagers they could, and dispersed them different ways through the surrounding country, in melancholy pursuit of the fugitive, joining eagerly in the search themselves.

The ladies then sat down dejectedly to breakfast; for even the Miss O'Byrons were not quite at ease on the subject of Laura's disappearing; some secret regrets mingling with the belief that they were rid of a dreaded rival, in a way to them less mortifying

mortifying than seeing her wedded before either of them had ever gained a serious lover.

Whilst these reflections occupied the daughters' minds, in that of their mother and Clarinda the most painful anxiety was excited for the uncertain fate of her so much and deservedly endeared to them.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

" Oh, can you think of nothing dearer to me,
" Dearer than liberty, my country, friends,
" Much dearer than my life, that I have lost?"

THE day, which was to have been devoted to bridal festivity at the Hall, passed in sadness, and gloomy anxiety, and expectation; and night arrived before the return of the gentlemen. When at length they appeared, grief and disappointment marked their features, and the poignancy of Captain Athol's agony of mind admitted not of consolation.

The

The wild expression of his eye, the paleness of his aspect, his dishevelled hair, his disordered dress, and starts of frenzied grief, struck Clarinda with horror; and while her heart sympathized in his sorrow, she trembled for the consequences with a character like his, impetuous and ardent by nature, and all his strong affections, all his best hopes of earthly happiness having centered in Laura; for the prospect of calling her his own, had elevated his spirit in battle, and inspired him with courage to signalize himself, to obtain his best reward—her favourable opinion, smile, and love, and share with her his laurels.

After a continuance of some weeks at the Hall, every day of which was devoted to the endeavour of discovering some trace of Laura, some clue to guide them to a knowledge of the cause that had deprived them of her, wearied at length by fruitless enquiries and vague surmises, Athol gave up the search in despondency, and the duties

duties of his profession summoned him away. Yet he could not without an additional pang tear himself from that spot, and those objects endeared to him by the recollection of Laura. Day after day he delayed his departure till it could be no longer deferred; and when he took his leave, with much emotion he bade farewell to Sir William, to Mr. and Mrs. O'Byron, and Albany; to the Miss O'Byrons he bowed with cold and distant civility; but when he met the swimming eyes of Clarinda, and saw her lovely hands extended toward him, he seemed to behold the same innocence and sensibility as had charmed him in Laura, and pressing the offered hands to his trembling lips, he darted out of the house, and mounting his horse, was out of sight in a few moments.

Soon after the departure of Captain Athol, some letters from the Castle hastened the return of Sir William and Clarinda, whose journey homeward was saddened

saddened by the melancholy uncertainty of their favourite Laura's fate.

It was night when they approached the cliffs, and the turrets of the Castle appeared from behind the projecting rocks, rising awfully in the gloom. Sir William had been some time silent; and Clarinda, leaning forward on the window of the chaise, observed an object moving slowly among some brushwood that grew by the road-side, and soon distinguished it to be the stranger she had seen on her first visit to Mrs. Lenarvon, and with whose name and quality she was still unacquainted. The eyes of Sir William followed those of his fair companion. In a moment his features became convulsed, his lips quivered, the colour fled his cheeks, and ordering the postillion to stop, he sprang from the carriage, unconscious for some minutes that Clarinda was following him with trembling steps and earnest importunity.

After

After proceeding on with eager searching looks directed through every surrounding path and covert, Sir William turned round, with an expression of hopeless anguish marked on his features, and starting on seeing Clarinda so near him, and observing that she seemed much alarmed, he pressed her in silence to his bosom; then putting her arm within his, he led her back to the carriage;—but Clarinda remarking the fineness of the evening, Sir William proposed they should walk to the Castle; and he ordered the servants to proceed with the carriage, and apprize Mrs. Millbrook of their approach.

As they walked on, Sir William, deeply engrossed by the circumstance that had so evidently alarmed him, and caused so much surprise to Clarinda, asked if she had not seen a tall man near the road side, when he so hastily quitted the carriage. Clarinda ventured only to reply that she had taken notice of such a person.

"And

"And in that person," said Sir William, "I thought I recognised one by whom I have been deeply, irreparably injured, and to whose perfidy I owe some bitter recollections that frequently sadden my thoughts."

Clarinda listened in a sort of fearful astonishment. Sir William paused.—Then resuming the subject—

"If," he cried, "it was that man, and I had overtaken him, perhaps I might thus late have seized a just revenge! Methinks his form and air are too deeply impressed upon my memory, for me to be mistaken! Yet, how it is possible he could dare to appear in this spot, is what makes me doubtful!"

Clarinda was fearful of making any observations, and Sir William walked on thoughtfully.

The rising moon tipped the rocks with silver, and darted its mild light over the unruffled bosom of the deep. The night breeze softly sighed among the cliffs, and gently

gently waved the grass by the narrow pathway which led them to the door of Norman's hovel. The old pair were seated at the entrance of their dwelling, enjoying the beauty of the scene, and had just expressed a wish for the return of Sir William and Clarinda, when they appeared before them. They both arose with tears of grateful attachment, first paid their respects to Sir William, pressed Clarinda to their hearts; and Alice, who was very loquacious, related many occurrences that had happened during their absence.

"Madam Millbrook has been very badly," said she. "Her daughter and the stranger gentleman, who visits them, has been sadly frighted about her; but she is now mending apace. I must likewise tell your Honour that James, the gardener, is waiting to marry Dolly, the dairy-maid, if your Honour gives consent. Poor Jukes, the fisherman, is gone *motancholy* mad for love of Jenny Dawson, who gives her company to 'Squire Hornet's footman,

footman, at Hornet Hall, a pragmatical prig, who only courts her out of spite to honest Jukes, because he beat him hollow at the boxing-match. Our old neighbour Wilkins died last week; he has never held up his head since he lost his good wife Bridget, and that is since your Honour and Miss have been away. Alas! it's a sad thing for a couple to be parted in their old age—one to be taken, and the other left!"—She looked mournfully at Norman; then addressing Clarinda—"There's all your birds at the Castle, Miss—they drooped after you was gone, and wouldn't eat at first; but Madam Millbrook brought them about at last. Your little favourite dog Fidelio, too, hung his head a long time, and refused his food; but what is worse than all, faithful old Jowler, your Honour's mastiff, has not been out of his kennel this fortnight, and by this time I think he must be dead."

Clarinda, much attached to Mrs. Millbrook, felt concern at this account, and

was not unaffected by the information Alice gave her about her favourite animals. Sir William enquired what Mrs. Millbrook's illness had been, and who the stranger was, of whom Alice had spoken, as so much interested about that lady.

"We know him by no other name but that of the strange gentleman," Alice replied. "Why sure your Honour must know him? for he is a great friend to Madam Millbrook and her daughter; and he is somebody of quality, I am sure, for he has no more pride about him than your Honour; but Miss can tell you more about him than I can. As to good Madam Millbrook, she got a fall going over the cliffs one dark night, to take some cordials to our neighbour Bridget, just before she died; she has had a great pain in her side, and a fever ever since, and some folks think she will never get over it; but I hope she will, for your Honour's sake and Miss Clary's; for you may never find another such motherly, kind-hearted woman,

woman, and one who is such a special manager at the Castle, and so charitable to the poor."

Sir William stood musing as Alice concluded; but observing the night-dew fall fast, he bade Norman and Alice a good night; and they turned into the path that led the nearest way to the Castle.

As they walked on, Sir William questioned Clarinda respecting the stranger of whom Alice had spoken. She simply related all she knew on that subject, described his person and manners, together with his conduct, as she had heard it spoken of by Mrs. Lenarvon; but with his name she was unacquainted. There was an air of mystery in this that forcibly struck Sir William; and the object he had traced in the gloom, was deeply impressed upon his mind.

Before they reached the Castle-gates, they were met by Mrs. Millbrook and her daughter; the former bore evident marks of indisposition, and the latter looked pale and languid; but they seemed to forget

every thing distressing, in the pleasure of again beholding their good benefactor and amiable young friend.

"We have heard of your accident, my dear Madam," said Sir William. "But why not mention it in your letter of last week to Clarinda?"

"Because I was then recovering, and was unwilling to give pain either to you, Sir, or my dear young lady," Mrs. Millbrook replied.

"And you, my fair mourner, have you been ill too?" enquired Sir William, gently tapping Mrs. Lenarvon's cheek; "or is it attention to your mother in her confinement, that has robbed you of that glow of health which seemed returning when we parted?"

"Indeed, Sir," returned Mrs. Lenarvon, "I have been much alarmed about my mother, whose fall we at first feared would be attended with very serious consequences."

"We heard this with concern from old Alice," observed Sir William; "and like-

wise how little Fidelio mourned the absence of Clarinda, how her birds drooped, and of my good old servant Jowler being either dead, or nearly so."

"He still lives to greet the return of his master," said Mrs. Millbrook as they passed through the Castle-gates; "and as for little Fidelio and the birds, they are all well, though at first they languished, from the absence of their kind mistress."

At that moment the little favourite spaniel came running from the Castle, and crouched at Clarinda's feet, who caressed him, and turned aside with Sir William, to look at old Jowler. He raised himself on hearing his master's voice, made a kind of hollow growling noise, licked the hand so well known, and fell back on his straw lifeless.

"Faithful old servant!" said Sir William, "has thy life been prolonged merely to take a last look at us!"

He turned to Clarinda, over whose cheek a tear fell, and he led her into the Castle, where they were met by Mrs.

Lenarvon's little boy, who seemed transported with joy at seeing them again; and the village clock striking ten, reminded his mother how much she had exceeded her usual time of being out; and taking her child in her hand, she hastened homeward.

While the table was spread in an adjoining room for supper, Sir William introduced the subject which dwelt upon his mind, and ventured to enquire who the stranger was that had taken so kind an interest in her afflictions, and visited her in her late illness, as he had been informed by Alice.

Mrs. Millbrook changed colour, and with some hesitation replied—

"He is a very faithful friend, Sir; and was once much attached to my daughter's late unfortunate husband, whom he endeavoured to save from ruin. His services deserved and ensured the gratitude of us all; but the kindness and assistance which he continued to my daughter after her widowhood, were attributed to motives as injurious to his noble and disinterested character, as they were disgraceful to her.

To

To avoid calumny, and likewise to prevent the continuance of those generous proofs of commiseration which we knew our benefactor's fortune could so ill allow, we secretly quitted the dwelling where he knew us, and sea air being advised for my daughter's declining health, we sought a melancholy refuge in the good old shepherd's cottage, where we were so fortunate as to be first distinguished by your benevolence. But in our present retreat, the too great anxiety of our former generous friend has traced us; still claiming the right of sharing whatever can affect our happiness, and sincerely rejoicing in our present good fortune."

"And the name of this stranger?" demanded Sir William with an abrupt impetuosity of look and manner, which neither Mrs. Millbrook nor Clarinda had ever observed before, and which surprised, and almost terrified them.

"You will, I hope, excuse me, Sir, if a promise prevents my revealing this

gentleman's name," Mrs. Milbrook replied with much hesitation.

"A promise!" repeated Sir William sternly; then, with a softened tone and manner—"I think," said he, "I already know this stranger's name;—if I judge right, it is Lynderville—Horatio, Lord Lynderville?"

Mrs. Millbrook turned pale, and bowed an assent.

"He is the very man," pursued Sir William in a hurried manner and agitated voice, "that I saw this night on the cliffs, whose treachery has imbittered my days, and who now comes to disturb the peace of my solitude!"

Mrs. Millbrook stood amazed and motionless; and Clarinda followed Sir William's steps, as he walked hastily up and down the room.

"It is this perfidious wretch, Madam!" he proceeded, fixing his eyes on the astonished Mrs. Millbrook, "this betrayer of the most solemn trust, who, thinking my vengeance dead, or my arm unnerved,

comes

comes even to my gates to insult me, or, perhaps, to destroy the beauty and innocence under my protection!"

"That Lord Lynderville is the person I alluded to, is a truth," said Mrs. Millbrook, trembling; "but if he is the character you describe, Sir, I can only say I too have been deceived in him."

"Who," exclaimed Sir William, "can be proof against his hypocrisies? Assuming the appearance of every virtue, he stabbed to the soul his best and bosom friend, took a base advantage of that friend's unsuspecting confidence, and stole the dearest treasure of his soul, conscious that the happiness of his future life depended on the object entrusted to his care."

Sir William paused; then looking gloomily at Mrs. Millbrook—

"Warn him, Madam, if you can, to avoid this place," he said. "His blood could not recall the angel he destroyed; and should we meet——"

Emotion prevented his concluding what

he was about to say; and Mrs. Millbrook eagerly cried—

"He is gone, Sir—he parted from us this evening, to pursue his journey to London. Unexpected by us, he first came to the cottage in the wood, where, though we wished to shun his friendly professions, and decline his offered services, a just remembrance of former benefits ensured him a grateful reception. During my late confinement, he repeated his visit, and remained at the neighbouring village, till I was out of danger. But never did he mention being known to you, although we often observed the quick and various changes of his countenance, whenever your name was pronounced, and as often wondered what could be the cause."

"To the accusations of a guilty mind I have long consigned him," said Sir William. "Be that his only punishment; and as his name is equally as affecting to me as mine can be to him, may his remembrance be, if possible, *banished* from my mind!"

They

They now sat down to the supper-table, but with little inclination to partake of it; they sat silent and embarrassed; and when Sir William bade the ladies a good night, there was a mournful severity in his aspect very different from the general expression of his features.

Mrs. Millbrook was deeply concerned to be compelled, by her knowledge of Sir William's honour and veracity, to yield up the high opinion she had so long entertained of Lord Lynderville, and which had been formed upon such just grounds, that she could not have believed any thing to his discredit, had it not come from such unquestionable authority.

To Clarinda this discovery respecting the interesting stranger whom she had seen, was little less distressing than it was to Mrs. Millbrook; for his fine person, his elegant manners, and the character she heard of him from Mrs. Lenarvon, had marked him in her mind as the most amiable and interesting of men; and

she would have found it difficult to believe that perfidy and ingratitude could be the bosom inmates of one so apparently excellent, had she heard the information from any other lips.

The next morning Mrs. Millbrook rose early, after a night of unquiet slumber, and hastened to her daughter, ere the sun was up, to communicate the cause of her uneasiness.

Mrs. Lenarvon heard the account of her mother with painful surprise; and before Mrs. Millbrook had well concluded, Sir William entered the cottage. He read in their countenances the subject of their conversation. He had passed a sleepless night; and, from the window of his chamber seeing Mrs. Millbrook hastening to the wood, he dressed himself, and followed her.

The ladies both arose, confusedly, on his entrance. He seated himself between them, and addressing himself particularly to Mrs. Millbrook—

"My

"My behaviour last night, Madam," he said, "was such as I remember with regret, and must have amazed and frightened you; and I come to apologize for it, as well I can, by revealing, in the presence of your daughter, who must be greatly interested on the subject, the cause of those violent emotions which I hoped had been subdued. Twenty years ago I was a young and very gay man. At an early age I was uncontrouled master of a large fortune, and freely indulged in every fashionable pursuit, when, after roving from one scene of dissipation to another, with all the thoughtless folly of youth and affluence, in a tour of pleasure through Italy, I met with a lady, whose exquisite charms and interesting situation fixed my wandering heart. She was the only child of a noble Neapolitan, who was banished from his native country, and deprived of his estates and honours by one of those conspiracies of party, by which men of great

great power and eminent talents frequently fall.

"Isabella Livoni was the only comfort of her unhappy father, the tender and unwearied soother of his wounded mind, and the enlivener of his solitude, when chance introduced me to their acquaintance. Sunk with him from grandeur and affluence, to obscurity and indigence, she forgot her own melancholy situation and prospects in endeavouring to soften his, and devoted her time and thoughts to cheer the dejection of her beloved parent. Her beauty first attracted my notice; but it was the brighter graces of her mind which made me love her. Her age was barely sixteen when I beheld her first; her face was such as it was not possible to behold without admiration; and her form might vie with the most faultless model of female symmetry. Unconscious of her perfections, she was equally so of their impression on my heart; and with the pure

pure emotions of gratitude and sensibility, she told me how greatly she was obliged by my attentions to her father, and allowed me to be their constant visitor—a permission highly satisfactory to me; hoping that time would do more for me, and that a return of affection, for which I sighed, would be my sure reward.

"Involved in the fate of her father, like him, too, forgotten by all those whose consanguinity and past professions of regard might naturally have made them suppose would extend some proof of friendship in the hour of adversity, Isabella thought herself happy and fortunate in my society, and the esteem which I felt for her father. She always received me with smiles of joy, attributing my attentions solely to respect for her father's merits, and commiseration of his wrongs, whose secret dejection and deep sense of the injustice he had sustained, whilst labouring with all his powers for the public good, preyed upon his health, and all Isabella's

Isabella's efforts to divert his melancholy, proved ineffectual. Smiling upon his dutcous daughter, he sunk under the weight of inward grief; and I saw his remains committed to the earth, whilst Isabella, almost overwhelmed by sorrow, was long inconsolable.

"My companions, with whom I had undertaken this tour, proceeded without me; and my heart became each hour more deeply engaged by the lovely orphan, whose distress added to the magic power of her charms.

"Some months elapsed in the delightful intercourses of friendship; and without absolutely declaring my passion, I had many reasons to indulge the delightful hope that it was well understood, and returned, when an event of considerable importance suddenly recalled me to England, and the bearer of this news which obliged me to hasten home, was Horatio Warbert, my near relation, now Lord Lynderville, then on his travels.

"Assured

"Assured in my mind of Isabella's attachment, and having a firm reliance on Horatio, I entrusted to him the treasure of my soul, beseeching him to watch over her safety and happiness, and guard her from every inconvenience until my return, which I should hasten by all possible attention to dispatch the business which awaited me in England.

"My confidence in the friendship and probity of Lynderville was founded on the excellent dispositions, and high sense of honour by which I had opportunities of distinguishing him, as well as by his particular regard evinced in many instances for me; and what satisfied my mind more entirely was, his being accompanied by a gentleman of great worth, under whom he had received the greatest part of his education.

"My affairs in England were soon arranged, and I returned, on the wings of Love, to the spot where I left my loved and beauteous Isabella.

"But

"But judge of my amazement and distraction when Mr. Ormes, the tutor of the base Horatio, met me with a look of horror; and after much prelude, informed me that his pupil had eloped secretly with the lady I had committed to their attention.

"My grief and rage surpassed all bounds. In the height of my despair, I accused Mr. Ormes of being an accomplice in this treachery; but he fully exculpated himself, and proved to me that he too had been deceived; nor did he leave any means in his power untried, to discover the fugitives, whose route we traced from Italy to England:—but here we lost the clue that had before guided our pursuit; and I yielded myself, up to the most uncontroulable affliction, vowing to be avenged on him who had betrayed my confidence, and, I had no doubt, had destroyed the innocence he had given his solemn promise to protect.

"The

" The father of Horatio then was living. He was of my own family, and a man of unblemished honour. I went to him, and told the story of my wrongs; but his son was equally lost to him, as my lovely Isabella was to me.

" On this unhappy subject, Lord Lynderville was little less affected than myself. To hear that his son was the cruel betrayer of innocence, that he had taken a base advantage of a trust reposed in him, and ruined by his perfidy a fair prospect of virtuous happiness, gave him the most serious concern; and he declared it was a breach of integrity, such as no force of passion could plead any excuse for.

" After many vain researches for his son, Lord Lynderville fell dangerously ill, and his danger becoming the subject of common report, reached the ears of Horatio, who burst from the place of his concealment, to throw himself at the feet of his dying father. When admitted to

that father's presence, he confessed his crime, urging irresistible love as the cause, and imploring forgiveness. Lord Lynderville, strictly just and honourable, told him there was but one way to make his peace, which was to offer the only reparation in his power to the lady he had so cruelly deceived.

"This Horatio readily agreed to, assigning his apprehension of his father's displeasure, as the only reason which had deterred him from marrying her before. But, on hastening to Isabella, she haughtily rejected the late, and, as she thought, constrained offer of that hand which she had so long in vain expected; and having buried the infant pledge of their unhappy passion, she took an opportunity, while Horatio was absent, to withdraw herself secretly from his protection; and I have never been able to discover her retreat, or to hear of her since. Lost and misguided Isabella! How truly have I lamented her fate, and wished to soften

its

its severity! In some cloister, I doubt not, she is now devoting her life to penitence, unless remorse consigned her to an early grave!

"The dying hour of Lord Lynderville was in part devoted to the endeavour of softening my resentment toward his son, whose guilt could not subdue natural affection in the mind of so excellent a father. But though he failed in his wish of effecting a reconciliation, he bound me by a solemn promise not to pursue his son's life.

"From that hour, when I committed Isabella Livoni to his care, until last night, I have never beheld the perfidious Horatio, much of whose time you, no doubt, know has been passed in foreign countries. When I recollect the promise of his boyhood, I think with astonishment of his conduct toward me, and the object of my first tender attachment devoted by him to destruction; as he acknowledged to his father, that it was under

under the mask of honourable profession, he seduced the affections of Isabella Livoni, and under a solemn promise of marriage, that he prevailed on her to elope with him, which made her so deeply resent the delay of that promise by which she had been deluded and dishonoured; and which must, on a mind proud and nice as her's, have inflicted sufferings painful to imagine, and which only the most savage barbarity could calmly witness, much less be the cause of.

"If I honoured Isabella on first witnessing her filial piety, and the many admirable qualities of her mind, I honoured her still more, when I heard with what virtuous resolution she scorned what she had great reason to consider as the forced proffers of satiated love, and nobly withdrew herself from him who, with solemn vows of truth and honour, and all the professions of virtuous attachment, had taken advantage of the unsuspecting nature of virgin innocence, and involved

in

in misery and disgrace a pure and guileless mind."

Sir William ceased; and while Mrs. Lenarvon sat revolving in her mind the circumstances of his relation, Mrs. Millbrook timidly observed—

"Was not Isabella too haughty? And might not youthful passion plead something in extenuation of Lord Lynderville's fault?"

"Youth," observed Sir William warmly, "is undoubtedly the season of error, but not of deliberate cruelty; then it is that a worthy heart is most open to generous feelings, and most incapable of persisting in injustice, or delaying to offer reparation for any wrong. How then, during the lapse of many months, could Horatio bear to see the bosom he professed to love, tortured with remorse and shame, and all the bitter consequences which fond affection and a too confiding spirit are often doomed to experience?—Let not the man who can be proof against all this,

this, pretend either to honour or humanity, while he could witness, with an hardened heart, the frequent sigh of self-reproach caused by him, the struggling tear called forth by his perfidy, and all the silent agonies of a mind too proud to complain—too conscious of disgrace, to ask a reparation. Yet all this, and more, perhaps, Horatio Warbert could steel himself against, and calmly wait till the stern justice of an offended father urged him to offer what, after the wounds he had given to the bosom that adored him, could, to a woman of any delicacy or dignity of mind, be of no value."

The ladies felt the force of Sir William's observations; and Clarinda appeared at the cottage-door, just as Sir William was endeavouring to persuade Mrs. Lenarvon to accompany them to the Castle.

The little boy, on hearing the well-known voice of his beloved Clarinda, ran and twined his arms around her lovely neck, kissed her glowing cheek, and while she

she returned his caresses, played with the redundant ringlets of her fine hair. Children seem, by a sort of natural impulse, to attach themselves to the good and amiable; and Clarinda was a general favourite among them, and equally fond of them in return.

They all hastened to the Castle to breakfast, after which, Clarinda, walking in the gardens with Mrs. Lenarvon, expressed so much concern on the subject of Sir William's agitation on the evening before, that Mrs. Lenarvon repeated to her the heads of what Sir William had related at her dwelling.

Clarinda listened with emotion; and when Mrs. Lenarvon had concluded, she could not conceal her indignation at the account of Lord Lynderville's conduct; and while she gave a tear to the ill-fated Isabella, she no longer wondered at the resentment and sorrow evinced by her benefactor.

CHAP. VII.

" Her terrors vanish'd, and a softer train
" Of mixt emotions, hard to be describ'd,
" Sudden her bosom seiz'd."

AT the farthest extremity of the cliffs, and at a considerable distance from the Castle, the father of Sir William had built a dwelling for a distant relation of his, reduced from affluence, and who he judged rightly in supposing would prefer a home of his own, to being a dependant at the Castle. This gentleman had died in that retreat; and from the period of his death, the Lodge of the Rocks, the name given to this dwelling, had

never been inhabited, till, soon after Sir William's return from Claverton Hall, a family to whom he was known in London, and who had visited the Castle, and been particularly pleased with the situation of the Lodge of the Rocks, solicited him to lend it for a few months to a lady in very declining health, as they thought the air and situation peculiarly desirable for her. Sir William could not refuse this request. Mrs. Millbrook was desired to get the Lodge well aired, and in the best preparation she could; and the invalid lady arrived at it with several attendants, and was received at the Lodge by Mrs. Millbrook, who represented her to Sir William as in a dying state, and apparently as melancholy as she was ill; and it was therefore judged improper to trouble a person in so weak and low a state with any visits of ceremony; though Sir William frequently sent to enquire after the invalid stranger's health, and to offer for

her accommodation and comfort whatever his Castle and estate afforded.

Not far distant from the Lodge, was a cavern, where the peasants often took shelter in severe weather; and there, in Clarinda's morning and evening walks, she generally stopped, seated herself frequently at the entrance, sometimes amused by the objects that presented themselves to her observation, and at others, occupied by a book, or sketching with her pencil the rude scenery around her.

On one of those evenings, the sky suddenly became covered with black clouds, and ascending the cliffs in her way back to the Castle, a heavy torrent of rain fell, and obliged her to take refuge from its violence under a broken piece of rock, which projected over the steep and narrow path that led up to the summit of the cliffs. Thunders rolled awfully, followed by vivid lightnings; the rain soon abated, and a calm ensued. But Clarinda, already wet

wet through, feared the sudden stillness was but a presage that the storm would soon return with an increase of fury, when the sudden barking of a dog made her hope some friendly hand was near, to guide her in safety up the dangerous precipice. Once or twice she attempted to climb up the cliffs; but the clay between the rocks, by the effect of the rain, made the ascent slippery; and desisting, she returned to her place of shelter under the rock, when again the dog she had heard before, barked louder, and in another minute a youth appeared, with a beautiful spaniel by his side.

His eyes were instantly fixed with an expression of surprise upon Clarinda, standing, wet and shivering, beneath the fragment of rock, while "the pure and eloquent-blood spoke in her cheeks;" adding to her native beauty, and conveying to the mind of the beholder a true

impression of her sense of danger, and of that timidity which wished, yet feared to ask a stranger's aid.

The youth approached her with almost equal timidity; and, as the rain had ceased, he respectfully offered his assistance to conduct her up the precipice, which Clarinda confusedly accepted.

As they ascended the steep and narrow footway, which between the sharp pointed rocks was so slippery with the heavy rain, that Clarinda was unable to keep her footing, and the stranger was obliged to support her in his arms, her straw hat blew away over the cliffs, and her luxuriant hair fell over her shoulders, and hung waving around her lovely face.

The stranger gazed on her with increasing interest, while she secretly wondered who he could be, as she met his fine dark eyes beaming on her's with admiration, as equally expressive of the most lively concern for her situation, without hat or cloak, and dripping with wet.

The

The rain again began to pour just as they reached the top of the precipice; and the youth entreated Clarinda to take shelter in the building near them, which was the Lodge of the Rocks; and the increasing of the tempest obliged her to comply with his entreaty. The thunder again began to roll, and the lightning to flash around them. The stranger wrapped his coat over Clarinda, and supported her on, with his arms encircled round her waist, to prevent her falling, as she slipped at every step, and her kid leather shoes could but ill defend her feet from the clay, deeply penetrated by the rain, in which she would have stuck fast, had not the youth disengaged her; and one of her feet being cut severely by a broken piece of rock in the path, he had some difficulty in enabling her to reach the Lodge. There they were met, on entering, by a lady, who had more the appearance of a beautiful statue than of a living creature. Her elegant form was wasted by illness,

and there was an air of anxiety in her countenance, which told Clarinda she had been uneasy at the young man's absence, and waiting impatiently for his return.

Hastening to meet the youth, who was her son, she stopped on beholding Clarinda, and a slight hectic crossed her lovely cheek, while the youth introduced his fair charge, simply relating their rencounter; and Clarinda was received by the lady in a manner that soon dispelled her confusion, and inspired her with confidence and respect.

After being conducted to the apartment of the lady, and being accommodated with dry garments, Clarinda was led into a small parlour, and went through the ceremony of a second introduction to a gentleman, whose countenance was as forbidding as that of the fair being, by whom she was so kindly received, was angelic.

This

This gentleman was the husband of the lady; and his repulsive countenance brightened as he observed the loveliness of Clarinda's features, and the graceful elegance of her form; for Mr. Ethelwood had ever been a passionate admirer of female beauty. His Lady had been eminent not only for her personal charms, but for her mental qualities and attainments. Little regarding her excellent disposition, her fine sense, and charming manners, he selected her as the object of his choice, from among many who sighed to share his wealth, merely for her beauteous face and graceful figure; and led her as a victim to the altar, well knowing her heart to be devoted to another object, and that she married him in mere compliance with her father's stern command.

The proofs of her aversion, the coldness and the tears that damped the festivity of the bridal day, made a deep and fatal impression upon the haughty Ethelwood,

and soon converted the adoring lover into an unkind and jealous husband; and the consequence of his continued unkindness and suspicions had, after long pining in secret anguish, at length utterly destroyed her health, and reduced her to that low and hopeless state in which Clarinda first beheld her.

The eyes of Mr. Ethelwood continued rivetted upon Clarinda's enchanting face, while, with blushing timidity, she turned aside, to avoid his earnest look; and observing that the rain had ceased, and the sun shone out with splendour, she arose, expressing her wish to hasten home, as she knew her absence in such a storm must have occasioned concern at the Castle; and while she was returning her acknowledgments to Mr. and Mrs. Ethelwood and their son, the latter took up his hat, to attend her; but his father prevented his doing so, observing that he had not changed his wet clothes, and would be liable to get cold, by remaining longer in

in them; and that therefore he would conduct the lady home himself. The countenance of the amiable youth was strongly expressive of chagrin; nor was Clarinda much less disappointed, for she had promised herself great pleasure in introducing her youthful deliverer from danger, to the acquaintance of Sir William.

As Clarinda crossed the cliffs with Mr. Ethelwood, she met two of the domestics belonging to the Castle, in quest of her; and she hastened on with more speed, when they informed her of Sir William's anxious fear on her account, when he found that she was from home during the violent tempest that had so suddenly arisen.

They had not proceeded much farther, when they were met by Sir William, to whom she introduced Mr. Ethelwood, and related the adventure of the evening, and the assistance afforded her by Mr. Ethelwood's son. Sir William expressed

to Mr. Ethelwood how much he felt himself obliged, and assured him how much he should be gratified by a farther acquaintance with him and his family; in return to which, Mr. Ethelwood bowed with cold and distant civility, while on Clarinda he again fixed his admiring eyes, as he withdrew.

"This gentleman," observed she to Sir William, "is not at all like his Lady and son. They are both handsome and engaging; but as for the father, his proud and severe aspect almost frightens me; his black and heavy brows seem brooding over something dreadful; suspicion and dismay glare in his fiery eyes; his large, unweildy figure is disgusting; and his deep toned voice terrified me almost as much as the thunder did."

"This Ethelwood——" observed Sir William thoughtfully; "I have often heard him spoken of, though, till now, I did not know we had ever met; but I observed by his manner, that he recollected we had;

had; though at that time, and till this moment, equally unknown to each other. In early youth, it was my chance one day to rescue from his hands a wretched female, whom he was treating with unmanly cruelty. Always an advocate of the sex, however degraded, I was warm in my resentment against her oppressor, and inflicted an instant punishment upon his cruelty, to which he submitted in a manner which proves the truth of the saying that 'tyrants are always cowards. But, though destitute of courage to shew his resentment, I see he is not without malice to cherish it; and be assured will always feel this old grudge against me, and never be a cordial or comfortable neighbour.

"Of his marriage with this lady, I have heard much. Her father, stern and haughty, made the match; and finding his daughter averse, he commanded her, on pain of his lasting displeasure, to receive the husband he had allotted for her.

It has been whispered, that when her father pronounced this fatal decision, the lady threw herself at the feet of Ethelwood, avowed her attachment to another, and besought him generously to withdraw his pretensions. But he was proof against her eloquence, cruelly persisted to secure the lovely prize, at the expence of her future happiness, and she became the victim of her tyrant father's will; whilst groundless jealousy, and all its train of racking disquietude, have been the unenviable portion of the no less tyrannic Ethelwood."

They had entered the Castle, when Sir William concluded; and Mrs. Millbrook met them, pale with the alarm Clarinda's absence had caused her, as a peasant had been at the Castle, and told her that while he was driving home his flocks, he had seen Clarinda on a distant part of the cliffs, had observed her endeavours to climb the rocks, at the commencement of the storm; but suddenly lost sight of her,

her, and being too far off, to render her any help, he feared she must have fallen from the precipice, as the place was difficult, and dangerous to ascend. The appearance of Clarinda therefore relieved Mrs. Millbrook from a state of extreme alarm; and after Sir William withdrew, Clarinda related her adventures to Mrs. Millbrook, and described the family, to whose acquaintance she was by that means introduced; dwelling with peculiar emotion on the interesting appearance and deportment of the mother, and the fine person and delightful manners of the son; and when night came, she retired to rest, her mind full of these pleasing images. Again she climbed the rocks, supported by the youthful Ethelwood's arm—again she heard him whisper in her ear assurances of safety—again she seemed to feel the pelting rain, and shudder while the awful thunder rolled, and the forked lightning flashed; and, defended by the stranger's garments, encircled in his protecting arms,

arms, she was again conducted to the Lodge, and welcomed by his interesting mother; while the appalling figure of his father arose gloomily to her imagination, and she awoke trembling.

The day had dawned, but the sun was not yet risen, when Clarinda shook off slumber, and opened the window of her chamber. The birds were beginning to chant their songs of gladness, the rain of the foregoing evening gave freshness to the face of Nature, and the plants and flowers in the garden, into which her apartment looked, exhaled a delightful fragrance. Clarinda's heart expanded with innocent pleasure; and taking a book from one of the shelves, she descended into the garden. It was a volume of Thomson which she had taken up, and seating herself on a bench shaded by woodbine, she read several pages; then closing the book, she resolved to proceed to the cottage in the wood, where she frequently breakfasted with Mrs. Lenarvon; but

but passing a part of the cliffs in her way, she stopped to ruminate on the adventure of the preceding evening, and turned, almost unconsciously, toward the spot where it had commenced.

The sun, just rose above the distant hills, darted its radiance o'er the waters, and reanimated the face of Nature. The fishermen were busied in preparing for their daily toil, the shepherds whistled, and the flocks bleated among the cliffs; and calm and silent as every thing was when Clarinda quitted her chamber, universal action had in the course of her walk, enlivened the scene, and cheerful labour reassumed its task. Clarinda seated herself on the topmost peak of the cliff she had ascended the evening before with the assistance of young Ethelwood, when her eye was attracted by some words which were newly engraved on one of the rocks. She drew near to it, and read—"Near this spot I had the good fortune to rescue from danger the most lovely of her sex."

Clarinda

Clarinda seemed fixed like a statue, motionless to the spot with astonishment, till the sound of a human voice, and the noise of dogs approaching, made her start; and raising her eyes, she beheld at some distance among the rocks, the youth whose image had occupied her thoughts ever since she had seen him before. Seized with alarm, and wishing to avoid being observed by him, she flew across the cliffs with sylph-like speed, and reached Mrs. Lenarvon's dwelling before she recollected that she had left her book on the rocks; and at the bottom of the little page was written—"A gift from Sir William Warbert to his grateful Clarinda."

"If the stranger should find it!" cried Clarinda with emotion, the instant she missed the book.

As a stranger was rather a novelty among them, Mrs. Lenarvon enquired to whom Clarinda alluded; and was soon informed of the circumstances that had intro-

introduced her to the Lodge of the Rocks. Seeing that Clarinda was much distressed by the loss of her book, Mrs. Lenarvon said she would accompany her in search of it; and tying on her hat and cloak as she made the offer, they immediately walked out arm in arm, and soon reached the summit of the cliff, where the book was left.

"It is gone!" cried Clarinda, while crimson died her cheek; "and he will know that I must have been here, and have seen the words which, no doubt, he cut in the stone."

"Perhaps," observed Mrs. Lenarvon, "it is fallen down, and might be found on the rocks below."

"Remain here till I return then, my dear Madam," cried Clarinda, disappearing by the narrow and steep descent leading down to the mouth of the cavern.

She proceeded in her search, and reached the fragment of the projecting rock, which had afforded her a shelter in the storm.

her temples in some water that issued from the cliffs, trembling with surprise, and fear for her life, while he was thus employed.

Mrs. Lenarvon, who with terror had seen Clarinda fall, and with amazement had likewise witnessed her preservation, hastened down the precipice, until she reached the spot where her friend, pale and motionless, was supported by the youthful stranger. Mrs. Lenarvon knelt down, full of alarm and agitation, and applied some volatile essence, which she happened to have in her pocket, calling upon her by the most endearing appellations, and by her tears and affectionate solicitude, proving her great attachment to the lovely sufferer.

Clarinda remained many minutes without sense or motion; and when she began to recover, her tears fell in torrents; and disengaging herself from the arms of her preserver, she hid her deep

deep confusion in the bosom of Mrs. Lenarvon.

When Clarinda, with the kind assistance of her companions, regained sufficient strength to walk toward the Castle, she endeavoured to express her grateful sense of the services she had so repeatedly experienced from the same hand; but words failed her as she fixed her eyes on the volume she had lost, which Ethelwood, during his concern for her safety, had secured in his bosom, and which she had not the resolution to claim; nor had he observed what Clarinda had written on the title-page, and was therefore ignorant to whom it belonged.

Trembling at every step, and tende[illegible] supported onward, Clarinda reached t[illegible] Castle-gates, when Ethelwood bowe[illegible] and took his leave, resisting, with evi[illegible]dently painful self-denial, the united entreaties of the ladies to accompany them into the Castle, and allow them to introduce

duce him to Sir William, who, Mrs. Lenarvon assured him, would entertain a just sense of the timely and important aid to which he owed the safety of the daughter of his heart—the endeared child of his generous adoption.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

"Oh happiness! where art thou to be found?
"I see thou dwellest not with birth and beauty,
"Though graced with grandeur, and in wealth array'd;
"Nor dost thou, it would seem, with virtue dwell;
"Else had this gentle lady miss'd thee not."

CLARINDA was severely bruised by her fall down the cliffs, and a tremor and dejection hung upon her spirits; while her repeated danger, and the preservation she had twice experienced from the same hand, made an impression on Sir William's mind almost as deep as that left on her own. He wrote a few lines of acknow-

ledgment to young Ethelwood; when, starting from his seat, as a sudden recollection crossed his mind, he called back the servant with the note, saying—

" If this young man, my Clarinda, is such as you represent him, he will give me credit for what I must feel on your account, without my expressing it, at the risk of exposing him to the resentment of his father, who, I see, cherishes a mortal antipathy against me, on the score of former humiliations, which his brutal nature justly deserved, and is not likely to forget."

A suppressed sigh heaved Clarinda's bosom; when a servant announced Mr. O'Byron and his son, who were then alighting at the Castle-gate; and Sir William and Clarinda hastened to meet them.

Mr. O'Byron, whose countenance was pale, with a sort of wild expression of grief depicted on it, wrung Sir William's hand in apparent anguish of soul, and requesting

requesting to speak with him alone, Sir William went with him into the library, and there learned that he was in pursuit of his youngest daughter, Frances, who had eloped that morning, they could not guess with whom; and to increase the affliction of himself and family, Lucy, his second daughter, was discovered a few days before to have been some months married to her father's groom.

These were events that hung heavily on the mind of Mr. O'Byron, and equally grieved and astonished his warm and sincere friend, Sir William, who suggested to him, as a likely means of having his daughter restored, to offer a very considerable reward to any person who would discover where she was.

Mr. O'Byron immediately hastened with Sir William to the nearest town, to put this advice in practice, leaving Albany with Clarinda, who, while he lamented the misconduct of his two younger sisters, mentioned the low state of health and

spirits which alarmed them for the elder, who was believed to be in a declining way, that threatened her life, and her danger seemed rapidly increasing.

Whilst Albany made these melancholy communications to Clarinda, and replied with an air of additional sadness, to her anxious enquiries respecting their lost and lovely Laura, to recover or trace whom, she was informed, all their researches had proved fruiltess, the secret passion cherished by Albany for his fair and blushing companion, was sufficiently evident in his expressive manner and love-fraught looks; and the appearance of Mrs. Millbrook released Clarinda from a state of painful embarrassment.

Clarind as late danger and providential escapes became the subject of their conversation; and Mrs. Lenarvon then joining them, described the beauty and elegance of the youth, whose arm had turned aside that danger, in such glowing colours, as added a deeper suffusion to Clarinda's cheek,

cheek, and suddenly changed the florid complexion of Albany to a deathlike paleness; and he sat silent, and evidently agitated, until Mrs. Lenarvon, observing his emotion, and the confusion of Clarinda, gave a more general turn to the conversation.

After having staid at the Castle much longer than was her usual daily custom, Mrs. Lenarvon arose to hasten home; and Albany proposed to Clarinda to accompany her to the wood.

During their walk, they met young Ethelwood. Exercise and the keen air of the cliffs gave new fire to his fine eyes, and added to the native spirit of his countenance. He addressed the ladies, enquiring, as was natural, with much solicitude, how Clarinda did after her late alarming accident.

Eloquent blushes accompanied the timid, yet graceful reply of Clarinda, as she rested on the arm of Albany, who trembled as she spoke; and as he haughtily

surveyed the fine person of Lionel Ethelwood, a crimson glow again mounted into his cheeks, and his eyes seemed to dart indignant fire.

"Is he not a charming young man?" asked Mrs. Lenarvon, as Lionel passed on toward the Lodge.

"The boy is well enough," said Albany, "and singularly fortunate in being so highly extolled for what was merely a matter of chance, and what any man would have done in the same situation."

"It was, however, a blessed chance that saved the life of our Clarinda; and her preserver will long and gratefully be remembered by all to whom she is dear," observed Mrs. Lenarvon.

"Assuredly he will," said Albany, softening his tone, and assuming a more placid look and manner, while he rivetted his eyes on Clarinda's burning cheek.

Sir William and Mr. O'Byron now appeared on horseback, and alighting, joined their party. They then proceeded with

with Mrs. Lenarvon to the border of the wood, wherein her dwelling was embosomed; and bidding her adieu, they returned by the nearest way to the Castle, where the subject of Margaret O'Byron's illness was again mentioned by her father; and Sir William entreated him to send her to pass a few months with them, to try what change of air and scene, and sea-bathing would do for her, often so efficacious in restoring the drooping invalid, after medical skill has failed.

"She is, I fear, my [redacted] daughter now," said Mr. O'Byron, turning aside, and struggling with the sigh of parental anguish.

Resolved to accept Sir William's invitation, and eager to send his daughter to the Castle, it was not without considerable difficulty that Mr. O'Byron could be prevailed on to rest himself after the fatigues and exertions that had exhausted his strength; and early on the following day, he departed with his son, to spread wider

the proffer of reward for the discovery of his younger daughter, and to get his elder one conveyed to the delightful society and salutary air of Warbert Castle.

In a few days, Albany returned with Miss O'Byron, who was indeed ill, and dejected in the extreme, and was accompanied by a lady, on a visit at Claverton Hall, when Sir William's kind invitation was communicated there; and at the earnest entreaty of Margaret, she became of their party to the Castle.

This lady, whose name was Evelyn, was arrived at that period of life when females who have never entered into the connubial state, are frequently denominated old maids; and the painful consciousness of having lost too much time, sometimes marks their features and tempers with a certain acidity, not very favourable to the anxious desire often retained of improving to better advantage the years that remain. But whatever Miss Evelyn might have felt in secret from the consequences

quences of disappointed vanity or ambition, she wisely concealed it from observation; her countenance continually wore the smile of good humour and happiness; and though she had received from Nature a form and aspect that could not easily be mistaken for a Venus or a Grace, yet her sweetness of temper, her goodness of heart, her gentle deportment, and winning address were the themes of praise and admiration among her fashionable friends, who all united to spread the favourable opinion; and her, whom no one envied, all united to extol; but although they could not persuade the world that she was either young or handsome, elegant or accomplished, yet she was generally allowed to be agreeable and good humoured, friendly and humane.

Miss Evelyn's family was poor, but of high origin, and uniformly reckoned largely upon the marriages of their females, in which point they had generally been remarkably fortunate; for Miss Evelyn's

elder sisters had all married very advantageously, one to an Earl, the second to a wealthy Baronet, and the third to a Right Honourable, equal in consequence to either.

The kind assiduities of Miss Evelyn endeared her extremely to Mrs. O'Byron, to whom she was nearly related; and that lady was highly gratified by the proof of friendship Miss Evelyn gave, in offering to become the companion of her drooping daughter's journey to Warbert Cliffs; the situation of her own family rendering it impossible for Mrs. O'Byron at that time to be absent from the Hall, where a mother's anxious feelings made her hourly hope for some account of her fugitive daughter.

The society at the Castle, who were all kindly attentive to Miss O'Byron, seemed to cheer her spirits. She took short walks on the cliffs, whenever the weather permitted, always accompanied by Miss Evelyn and Clarinda; frequently with the

the addition of Mrs. Millbrook and her daughter, and sometimes conducted by Sir William, who had lately not appeared so often on the cliffs, as had been his daily custom before the Ethelwood family came to reside at the Lodge.

In their walks, the ladies frequently met the amiable Lionel, who seemed to watch for their appearance on the cliffs, always joined their party, led them to the most romantic scenes, and pointed out the most striking beauties of that wild region. Sometimes, when the weather was remarkably inviting, they found him near the lodge, supporting on his arm, the lovely, though fading form of his mother, whose countenance always brightened on beholding Clarinda; and they met with those emotions of reciprocal and cordial delight which always mark the intercourse of good and congenial minds. But while Clarinda always flew to meet Mrs. Ethelwood, her eyes beaming with the warmest esteem, and the most lively

interest about her health, she often in secret reproached herself for the cold returns she made to all the professions of friendship hourly lavished on her by the agreeable, good-humoured, charitable Miss Evelyn, who was become a general favourite at the Castle, and particularly distinguished by the good opinion of Sir William.

"Surely no mean envy, or hateful jealousy can have crept unawares into my breast?" said Clarinda to herself, as she reflected on her undesigned reserve towards Miss Evelyn.

While Clarinda thus scrutinized her heart and conduct, she felt it a duty to subdue what was in reality nothing short of a secret antipathy to Miss Evelyn, and appeared to be groundless, and consequently unjust. In her determination to overcome this unaccountable prejudice, she began by being particularly attentive to Miss Evelyn; but whenever she met her eyes, and observed the character of

her countenance, affection and confidence seemed repelled; and she felt an unconquerable repugnance to that union of mind, and communication of thoughts which Miss Evelyn, by such unwearied attention, and professions of regard, endeavoured to secure.

Miss O'Byron's health continued to amend daily, while that of the lovely invalid at the Lodge, declined fast. Her strength had so much failed during the lapse of a few weeks, that she was no longer able to appear on the cliffs, nor even in the garden of the Lodge; but was lifted from her bed to a sofa each day, in the arms of her attendants, and by the same means conveyed back to her chamber, to pass her nights in painful melancholy vigils.

But the filial affection of Lionel soothed the sufferings of his amiable mother. He watched her couch, endeavoured to amuse her mind, and often hung over her altered features in speechless agony, while she

slept.

slept. Finally, he might be said to weary Heaven with prayers for his loved parent's recovery; but the Allwise Disposer had a brighter lot in store for Mrs. Ethelwood; and called her, in his love, to a participation of that happiness, for which her many virtues and her patient endurance of disappointment and secret sorrow in this life peculiarly fitted her.

Mr. Ethelwood, after accompanying his Lady to the Lodge of the Cliffs, was soon recalled by business to London; but before his departure, he strictly enjoined his son never to hold any intercourse with Sir William Warbert, nor to enter the Castle, on pain of his lasting displeasure; but assigned no other reason for this injunction, which appeared to Lionel so mysterious and severe, but that the owner of the Castle was not the character the world supposed; and had he known him better before, he should not have ventured near so dangerous a neighbour, and should remove his family, as soon as another place

equally

equally favourable for Mrs. Ethelwood's health, could be procured, especially as the Lodge was not hired, but only lent by Sir William, to whom he professed an abhorrence of owing a favour.

Surprised, but not quite satisfied on this subject, duty obliged Lionel to promise strict obedience to his father's will; but as it did not extend to forbid a friendly intercourse with Clarinda, her visits of enquiry respecting Mrs. Ethelwood were admitted at the Lodge, where she went daily, after Mrs. Ethelwood became so ill as to be unable to walk out; and Miss Evelyn, or Miss O'Byron, sometimes both, never failed to accompany her thither, where the sufferings of the mother, and the sorrow and tender attentions of the son could not but create a strong interest in any mind of sensibility.

As soon as the business that had summoned Mr. Ethelwood to London, was settled, he hastened back to the Lodge, where, on his entrance, he was met by his

his son, pale and agitated; and was told by the afflicted youth, that the dying hour of his mother was at hand.

When Mr. Ethelwood reached the bedside of his expiring Lady, a momentary gleam of joy crossed her heavenly countenance, and raising herself on her husband's approach, she pressed her quivering lips to his cheek, joined her forehead, bedewed with drops of agony, to his, made an ineffectual effort to speak, then eagerly clasped the hands of her son, fixed her last fond regard on him, then sunk upon his bosom, and the struggle of parting life was over!

The grief of Mr. Ethelwood was really great, but that of Lionel surpassed what language can describe. Mr. Ethelwood was attracted at first merely by the external loveliness of his Lady. But as that is a charm that soon fades, or becomes familiar to the eye, and consequently loses its bewitching power, the adoring lover was soon changed into the cold and careless

careless husband, as he was not a character capable of understanding or valuing the graces of her mind, although he never refused to acknowledge her merit, and in his heart felt that esteem for her many virtues, that respect for her general conduct, which his behaviour had not always testified; and though surrounded by all that grandeur and affluence could bestow, Mrs. Ethelwood's mind was formed for far superior happiness, and she had been a wretched, though an exemplary wife.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

"But let me pay the tribute of my grief,
"A few sad tears to thy loved memory."

SEATED by the cold remains of his mother, Lionel Ethelwood was fixed in motionless and silent grief, his eyes gazing on the mournful object, and its hands clasped between his own; not a tear fell, but the stupor of unutterable anguish nearly overpowered his reason.

His father, more collected, spoke to him, without being heard; he was absorbed in sorrow, and when it became proper for him to quit the apartment, it was

was with extreme difficulty that he was prevailed on to withdraw from the melancholy scene.

The news of Mrs. Ethelwood's death was speedily conveyed to the Castle. Sir William heard the account with concern, having a respect for the character he had heard of that lady; while Clarinda wept in secret, as she had tenderly regarded Mrs. Ethelwood, and all the family looked sad.

Mrs. Ethelwood had particularly desired that whenever she died, her funeral might be conducted with the utmost privacy, and with as little expence as possible. Her remains were therefore borne by poor peasants at midnight, to the parish church, where she had directed they should be deposited; and the money that must have been expended in a costly funeral, was distributed amongst the families of the indigent men who carried her corpse, and some of their most necessitous neighbours, many of whom crowded around her

her grave; for she had been, while at the Lodge, and during her whole life, the friend of the distressed, and the blessings of the poor and afflicted followed her steps.

Clarinda, in her lonely walks, frequently before her companions were risen, visited the church-yard, and sat down by the grave of her departed friend; for though so lately known to Mrs. Ethelwood, the similarity of their minds had endeared them extremely to each other. One morning, Lionel surprised her at his mother's grave in tears. The first glow of astonishment on his countenance was quickly succeeded by the pallid hue of heartfelt grief; and while he mourned his mother's death, admiration of Clarinda's character animated his features. He sat on the earth beside her, he leant down with his face upon the sod, and moistened it with his tears. Clarinda wept in mournful sympathy. He forgot the severe injunctions of his father, to be guarded

guarded against the attractions of the charming maid of the Castle; and as she arose, he pressed her hand to his lips, and imprinted upon it a glowing kiss. In the next moment, the impropriety of his conduct smote upon his heart, and with severe self-accusations, he most earnestly besought Clarinda's pardon, who, with averted eyes, walked slowly on in silence.

"Another time then," he cried, "another time, perhaps, pure and angelic as you are, you may deign to pardon him, who respects you too much ever to know one moment of peace, while conscious of having justly incurred your displeasure!" —He paused, and raising his dark eye he said in a voice almost choked by emotion—"Sainted mother! is it to thy hallowed grave that I come to offend the purity of female delicacy, for the first time in my life!"

The

The big drops fell over his cheek. Clarinda looked up, and started at the paleness of his aspect, and the wild expression of his eye. His looks and his manner affected her powerfully. A few words of consolation sprang to her lips; but just as she was about to give them utterance, Sir William met them. Lionel looked abashed; and Clarinda started again, and blushed deeper than before. Sir William returned the respectful bow of Lionel, and informed Clarinda that he had been in search of her, in many of her favourite walks. She forced a sort of melancholy smile, and putting her arm within that of Sir William, wished Lionel a good morning, who, ill at ease in mind, bent his steps slowly to the Lodge.

Sir William questioned Clarinda about Lionel more than he had ever done before, and asked particularly how they had met that morning.

" Chance

"Chance had directed them to the same spot in their walks," she replied.

"I advise you to avoid this youth as much as possible," said Sir William very seriously.

Clarinda looked up with surprise and confusion.

"He is amiable and handsome," observed Sir William, "and I can see he does not behold you with indifference; but to encourage any particular liking between you, would only be to render you both completely wretched; for Mr. Ethelwood assuredly would oppose any union with my family, nor should I much approve an alliance with his."

"Dear Sir, believe me, your fears are groundless," said Clarinda with trembling hesitation.

"I doubt not either your sincerity or your prudence," observed Sir William tenderly; "but, my dear child, I wish to guard you against the most distant approach

approach of unhappiness, which often enters the heart in an alluring form, while innocence and inexperience are unguarded against danger.

Clarinda pressed Sir William's hand to her heart; the subject was dropped, and they entered the Castle, where breakfast awaited them.

CHAP. X.

"The wind sighs through the grass. Their memory rushes on my mind. In the tomb of the mountain they rest in peace."

MRS. MILLBROOK, whose valuable qualities, and domestic usefulness, together with the gentleness of her temper and manners, and the warm benevolence of her heart, had firmly secured to her the friendship of Sir William, and endeared her to all his household and dependants, had never got the better of the effects of the fall she had on the cliffs; a lameness remained, which prevented her

taking her accustomed exercise; her health and spirits declined, medical skill failed to afford her relief, she lost her appetite, the colour fled her cheek, her eyes became sunk and languid, her form wasted, and no longer able to attend to the management of Sir William's family, she besought his permission to remove to the cottage of her daughter, in whose affectionate bosom she expired a few weeks after she quitted the Castle!

Clarinda was seldom absent from the cottage in the wood, during the last illness of Mrs. Millbrook. She tenderly loved both the mother and daughter, and shared with the latter those fatigues and watchings, which attention to the sick renders necessary. For some weeks, she was scarcely ever at the Castle; but Sir William visited the cottage every day; and thus, frequently seeing him, she regretted not her absence from home. But when, after the interment of Mrs. Millbrook, Clarinda returned to the Castle, and,

and, at her entreaty, Mrs. Lenarvon and her son accompanied her there, to remain till the impression of the loss they had sustained, yielded a little to the power of time, they observed that during the absence of Clarinda, Miss Evelyn had well improved her time, had ingratiated herself more than ever with Sir William, seemed to have obtained a considerable ascendency over his mind, influenced his opinions, and, in fact, assumed all the consequence and authority of Lady of the Castle.

Clarinda observed all this immediately on her return home; but she confined the observations to her own breast, when, one morning, as she was sitting with Mrs. Lenarvon in her own apartment, Miss Evelyn entered, to impart to Clarinda what she assured herself would be a piece of welcome intelligence, that Sir William had consented, in consequence of her solicitation, to give a ball at the Castle in the following week. Clarinda listened to Miss Evelyn in silence, and declined her

eyes mournfully upon the sable dress of Mrs. Lenarvon and herself.

"I thought you would be delighted," said Miss Evelyn to Clarinda, in a half whisper; "but it seems I was mistaken; so, my dear Miss Warbert, we will have no ball, for its design was chiefly to amuse you, and dispel the present gloom which prevails in, and around the Castle, and the indulgence of which can do no good, but to depress your charming spirits, and in the end affect your health."

Mrs. Lenarvon stole out of the room.

"We are so rejoiced at having you again restored to us, my dear girl," resumed Miss Evelyn, "that I purposed an evening's amusement on the glad occasion."

Clarinda bowed coldly, and observed she was sensible of the attention, and begged she might not prevent pleasure, because not in spirits to partake of it.

"Oh,

"Oh, my dear, we can have no pleasure without you!" Miss Evelyn exclaimed. "Sir William sympathizes in all your dejections; and to see the heads of the family unhappy, must affect us all, and exclude all idea of festivity."

"Festivity at this time is not exactly in unison with my feelings, I confess," Clarinda observed; "nor can it, I should think, from what I know of Sir William, be with his, from our recent loss of one who served him with zeal and fidelity, and might be termed a second mother to me; beside, the circumstance of having Mrs. Lenarvon with us, who naturally is much afflicted at her worthy mother's death, should, in my simple judgment, prevent revelling."

Miss Evelyn looked abashed and displeased.

"Did Sir William understand you, Madam, when a ball was proposed?" asked Clarinda.

"I conclude he did, Madam," answered Miss Evelyn, forcing a smile, and endeavouring to reassume her natural placidity; "I never found Sir William slow to understand."

Clarinda reddened, when the entrance of Sir William proved a welcome relief; and Miss Evelyn managed the subject of the ball with such address, and turned the disappointment so much to her own advantage, by rising a step higher in Sir William's opinion, from her apparent solicitude in whatever was proposed to promote the comfort and happiness of his beloved Clarinda, that the latter sat wrapped in silent astonishment, and wondering at her own simplicity, that knew not how to dress her face in smiles, to conceal chagrin and disappointment, nor to utter flattering language, while vexation and wounded pride rankled in her breast.

Miss O'Byron, whose health began visibly to mend, from the first week of her being at the Castle, soon regained the vivacity

vivacity and bloom of youth and health, the only charms she ever possessed; and her brother, who was a frequent visitor at the Castle, informed her that, as she was so much recovered, their parents anxiously wished for her return home. But Margaret had never been remarkable for attention to the wishes of her parents. On the cliffs, wild and solitary as she at first thought them, she had found such new charms, that she could not think of quitting them without pain; for there, when accompanying Clarinda in her daily rambles, she had often met, and conversed with Lionel Ethelwood; and though she did not possess the most refined sensibility, she beheld his elegant figure and striking countenance with admiration, and listened to the polished language of his highly-cultivated mind with a pleasure unfelt by her before. But while she studiously watched Clarinda's steps, when she saw her inclined for a walk, knowing that they were always likely to meet

Lionel in some of their favourite scenes, her presence was a painful restraint upon the youth, whose native civility was, however, such as flattered Margaret into an opinion that he was not wholly insensible to her merits, nor unconscious of the impression he had made upon her heart.

While Clarinda and Margaret climbed the rocks, explored the caverns, or traversed the beach with young Ethelwood, Mrs. Lenarvon and her little boy were the constant companions of Sir William and Miss Evelyn, to the frequent mortification of the latter, who had been much gratified by some agreeable *tête-à-têtes* previous to the arrival of those, to her, unwelcome visitors.

Mr. Ethelwood had hastened from the Lodge soon after his Lady's death, and had requested his son would follow him to London, as soon as he was able, after the fatigue and grief he had endured by attending his mother in her illness, and witnessing

witnessing all her sufferings. His father was therefore much surprised at the continual excuses in Lionel's letters, for prolonging his stay at the Lodge, and still more so when, on his return there to learn the cause, to find his son wandering, like a hermit, among the rocks, indulging a sort of tranquil melancholy, often sheltered in some secluded grot, perusing the classic page, or joining his flute to the artless melody of the shepherd's evening pipe.

The extreme attachment which Lionel had borne to his mother, was believed by Mr. Ethelwood to be the cause of his remaining so long at the Lodge.

"Here you continue nursing sadness, Lionel," said his father, "and brooding over the memory of that angel whom all our tears cannot recall."

Lionel fixed his flowing eyes on the portrait of his mother, which hung at his bosom.

"She was indeed an angel on earth!" cried Lionel; "and is now a more exalted one in Heaven!" he added, pressing the portrait to his lips.

"But what can it avail thus to indulge sorrow?" asked Mr. Ethelwood in a more gentle tone than was his custom when he disapproved. "I want you to transact some business for me in London," he continued, "and you must set off to-morrow."

"For London, Sir?" asked Lionel with surprise.

"Yes," replied Mr. Ethelwood, "change of scene will do you good. You look pale and dispirited, and if I suffer you to remain here, nursing melancholy, and buried in retirement, you will soon become unfit for the station you are designed to fill; and it would not be very gratifying to me, to see my only child, and the son of so much promise, so much hope, metamorphosed into one of the shepherds of this sequestered spot."

Lionel blushed, his heart beat with emotion; but he was silent, and bowed in obedience to his father's will.

In the evening, he walked all over the cliffs, but did not meet Clarinda. He descended to the cavern, where she frequently rested; but wanting her presence, it appeared to him a dark and dreary recess. He graved on the rock these words—"To-morrow, by dawn of day, Lionel Ethelwood quits these endeared scenes, and for a time loses sight of the bright object of his heart's secret adoration."

"What are you about there?" said a soft voice behind him.

He started, and looking round, beheld Clarinda at the entrance of the cavern. Involuntarily he raised his hand to erase the words inscribed on the rock.

"Vain effort! They are engraven too deep—they are not to be obliterated!" he cried, springing forward, and clasping the fair hands of Clarinda between his.

Clarinda blushed like crimson, and the

next moment turned pale as the lily; when Margaret O'Byron appeared, having been some time in search of Clarinda.

Although the presence of Margaret was by no means welcome to Lionel, it afforded a considerable relief to Clarinda; and recovering from the deep confusion into which she had been thrown, she endeavoured to appear more gay and lively than usual, as she tripped lightly up the rocks, declining to accept the assistance of Ethelwood, and recommending to his care Miss O'Byron, as being less accustomed to climb the cliffs, and consequently more apprehensive of danger.

They proceeded onward, till they reached a green mount, at whose foot Clarinda had planted a bower of interwoven jasmine and honeysuckle, and which Lionel had adorned with many a fragrant flower.

Here they rested, observing the peasants returning home from labour, and listening to the waves beating among the rocks.

"To-morrow

"To-morrow I quit these scenes," said Lionel, fixing his eyes on those of Clarinda, who, averting her's, turned pale; while Margaret starting up, exclaimed--

"Do you indeed? Oh, how we shall miss you in our walks! And how glad should I be to see you at Claverton Hall! My brother would like you for an acquaintance, I know; and you might find him worthy of your friendship, and my father and mother would be pleased with your society."

Lionel bowed in some embarrassment, and assured Miss O'Byron he was very sensible of her obliging attention; and while they were exchanging expressions of civility, Clarinda resumed her native ease of manner, and reminded Margaret it was time to return to the Castle.

The lively colour left the cheek of Lionel, as the ladies arose. He walked beside Clarinda in silence, until they came to a spot, where the road they pursued, divided into two narrow pathways, one

one leading directly to the front gate of the Castle, and the other being the nearest way to the Lodge.

"Here then I suppose we part," said Clarinda timidly.

Lionel directed a look to her, which seemed to say—

"Must I then go no further? Must I lose sight of you, perhaps to meet no more? And must I leave you without being allowed to say, that on you the future happiness of my life depends?"

The expression of his countenance was well understood; but custom has imposed upon woman the painful task of dissimulation; and Clarinda endeavoured to assume a coldness and insensibility, much the reverse of what was her real disposition.

"Adieu!" cried Lionel, accepting the proffered hand of Margaret, and pressing the reluctant one of Clarinda to his trembling lips.

Margaret wept, and Clarinda turned hastily

hastily into the path that led to the Castle.

"Adieu! adieu! Miss Warbert!" repeated Lionel, almost flying down the steep footpath as he spoke.

Clarinda looked back; her eyes were filled with tears, but Lionel was out of sight, and Margaret slowly followed her, sobbing as she came. Clarinda stopped, and Margaret leaned on her arm, still sobbing.

"My dear girl, how is this?" enquired Clarinda.

"Did you not observe how much he was affected at parting with us?" asked Margaret. "And is he not a charming young man? How we shall miss him in our daily rambles! Those scenes will be quite dismal when he is gone!"

"I have heard a great deal about the magic power of love," said Clarinda gaily; "but it is you, my dear Margaret, who experience its wonder-working influence; for this wild region seemed to have but

few

few charms for you, before we met the youthful Ethelwood; and without his presence, I find they will again appear a dreary solitude."

"Dear Miss Warbert, you don't conclude I am in love, surely!" cried Margaret.

"No, indeed; but here, where we have so few beaux, to be sure such a fine young man as Mr. Ethelwood is of consequence; and though you laugh, I know you are sorry he is going, as well as I am."

"Keep your own secret, and I will keep mine," returned Clarinda archly; "and, above all things, we must beware of introducing this subject before Sir William."

As she spoke, she observed her benefactor coming in search of them; and they hastened to meet, and accompany him home.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

" In such a night as this,
" When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
" Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan wall,
" And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
" Where Cressid lay that night."

LIONEL could no longer delay his journey, in obedience to his father's will; but the night before his departure, was to him a sleepless one. He arose at midnight, the air was mild and serene, the moon shone brightly, he crossed the cliffs, he stopped at Clarinda's bower at the foot

foot of the little mount, he proceeded to the Castle, and seemed to trace the steps of Clarinda through the walks she most frequented. Thoughtless of consequences, he leaped the garden-wall, seated himself on a mossy bank, and remained there some time, gazing upward on the window of Clarinda's chamber. Presently he observed, through the staircase windows of the Castle, a female figure descending, whose white floating garments made his heart palpitate with the hope of its being Clarinda. Dark clouds suddenly enveloped the moon, and he lost sight of the object of his hope. Again a gleam of light crossed the garden, and he saw the same female form he had observed through the windows, issue from the Castle. A white morning robe was loosely folded around her, and her face was concealed by a muslin veil.

"It is Clarinda!" he said, almost breathless, and turning into a walk, where he knew they must meet. "It

is—

is—it must be herself—and I shall behold and speak to her once more!"

He stepped on lightly, and the fair one turned round an angle near him. A little harbour stood invitingly open, as he passed.

"I will conceal myself here," said he, "and observe her more closely."

The lady passed through the garden with a quick step; and opening a little gate, she proceeded to the cliffs, Lionel softly following with caution at some distance, until he saw her go into the cavern, so much frequented by Clarinda.

"It can be no other but the idol of my heart," whispered Lionel, as he traced the steps of the lady.

She approached the words he had graved on the rock; she applied her lips to them with passionate gesture; then throwing herself on a seat cut in the rock, she leaned down her head upon her lap, and wept aloud.

Lionel softly drew close, unobserved.

"Oh,

"Oh, that to me these words were addressed!" cried the lady—"that I was the object of his adoration, as he is of mine!"

Lionel started up at the well-known voice. The love-sick fair one raised her head, and alarmed at finding a person so near her, she threw up her veil in surprise and confusion, and discovered not the features of the lovely Clarinda, but those of Margaret O'Byron. Lionel, pale with astonishment, continued retreating. Margaret, overwhelmed with confusion, sat, like a statue, gazing on him.

"He flies me as an object of hatred and contempt!" she faintly pronounced, as Lionel disappeared. "I shall be despised, and perhaps exposed to the derision of my rival—the happy, the beloved Clarinda."

The consuming fires of jealousy and envy were kindled in her bosom, and all their train of baleful passions followed; hatred and malice gained easy dominion over

over the mind of the unhappy and mortified Margaret, and the beauty and merits of Clarinda were as poniards levelled at her heart.

Lionel began his journey before sunrise. The morning was gloomy, and the towers of the Castle were hid in the clouds, as he passed beneath its walls. He stopped his horse a moment, and Clarinda appeared at her window, looking pale and dejected. He bowed, and she inclined her head toward him, smiling; he kissed his hand—she blushed, and waved her handkerchief. Elevated almost beyond reason by this condescension, Lionel set spurs to his horse, and was out of sight in a few minutes.

Secret dejection preyed upon Clarinda's mind, unobserved by all around her; alone, she sought the scenes which had been frequented by Lionel, and once or twice in her solitary rambles, she met his father, whose looks of admiration embar-

rassed her, as they had done when she first beheld him at the Lodge; and as he walked beside her toward the Castle, his few words were so strongly expressive of the same sentiment, that Clarinda trembled at his presence, and resolved no more to walk out alone, while he remained at the Lodge, which was only for a few days.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

" What is't? A spirit!
" ——— Believe me, Sir,
" It carries a brave form."

AS superstition is ever the companion of ignorance, the belief of ghosts and hobgoblins still prevails among the uninformed part of society, particularly in scenes remote from the busy haunts of men; and soon after the death of Mrs. Ethelwood, it was whispered among the inhabitants of the cliffs, that her apparition was often seen near the Lodge; and some asserted that Clarinda had been observed

observed more than once in conversation with the spectre.

This latter rumour appeared so extraordinary to Sir William, that although he had smiled at the account of the apparition, he questioned Clarinda on the subject, who, with evident agitation, assured him she had neither seen nor conversed with any ghost, and disbelieved all such appearances.

Though rather at a loss to account for Clarinda's embarrassed and agitated manner, Sir William thought no more of the subject, until one evening late, as he was walking on the cliffs, a shepherd-boy met him, and addressing him with looks of terror, said in a faltering voice—

"If your Honour would but go down to the cave, where Miss Clarinda frequents, you would now find her in company with the ghost!"

Sir William started; the boy disappeared, and Sir William resolved to descend the cliffs, when, to his utter astonishment, just

just as he gained sight of the mouth of the cavern, a form issued, so enveloped in white drapery, that no part of its head or shape could be distinguished. The figure held Clarinda by the hand, while she seemed talking to it with passionate gesture. Sir William rushed down the rocks. Clarinda raised her eyes; the mysterious figure disappeared in an instant, and Sir William caught Clarinda almost lifeless in his arms.

"What is it?" asked Sir William, trembling, as Clarinda hid her face in his bosom. "Is it," he proceeded, "young Ethelwood who thus assumes a mysterious form, to pursue your affections, and indulge a passion forbidden?"

"Oh no, Sir!" cried Clarinda in extreme agitation, "indeed it is not he, nor dare I tell you what it is! Duty, a solemn injunction, imposes silence on me! All I can disclose is, that it is neither ghost nor lover, and its communi-

cations are hallowed by a sacred name, though I am bound not to reveal it."

Sir William put her gently from him with a look of penetrating anguish, and was quitting the cavern in silence. Clarinda fell on her knees, besought him not to leave her in anger, and repeated the words—"Duty—a sacred claim—a solemn vow, from which time only could absolve her."—Sir William raised her tenderly, gazed earnestly in her face, then kissed off a tear from her cheek, but without uttering a word; and putting her arm within his, he conducted her in silence to the Castle, when, hastening to his apartment, he was seen no more for the night; and Clarinda, whose heart was torn with contending feelings, flew to her chamber, and locked herself in.

Though the guests at the Castle were quite unacquainted with the circumstances of this mysterious affair, they could not but observe a great change in the

the behaviour of Sir William and Clarinda, while at a loss to guess the cause.

Albany O'Byron, who had been for several weeks expected at the Castle, now arrived there, assigning, as the reason of his not appearing before, his having been under the necessity of visiting London, to settle some business for his father, who was prevented from going there himself, by Mrs. O'Byron's being severely indisposed; and that the latter wished anxiously for the return of her daughter and Miss Evelyn. With this wish both the ladies expressed their readiness to comply, and Margaret was impatient to be at home, being seriously alarmed by the account of her amiable mother's state, who had never been able to conquer the deep impression made on her mind by the conduct of her two younger daughters.

As the Secret of the Cavern had made a considerable alteration at the Castle, where displeasure and suspicion marked Sir William's features, and sadness and

constraint preyed upon Clarinda's heart, change of scene seemed to the former, from many considerations, particularly desirable, and he readily yielded to Albany's entreaty to accompany them to Claverton Hall.

The journey to the Hall was rather a gloomy one. The depression of Clarinda's spirits was evident, notwithstanding all her efforts to conceal it. Sir William was silent and thoughtful. Albany's whole attention was engrossed by the lovely dejected Clarinda. Miss O'Byron was quite out of spirits, and Miss Evelyn endeavoured unsuccessfully to diffuse cheerfulness around her.

On arriving at the Hall, they found Mrs. O'Byron much worse than they had been taught to expect. A rapid decline seemed preying on the springs of life, her fine graceful form was wasted almost to a skeleton, her eye had lost its lustre, and hectic flushed the cheek so lately adorned with the purest glow of health.

Margaret, who truly loved her mother, flew into her arms, and wept in agony on her bosom. Clarinda was welcomed by an affectionate embrace, and Mrs. O'Byron and she observed each other's altered looks with silent concern; while Sir William, turning away with emotion from the emaciated form and languid countenance of her he had not long before seen blessed with health, and distinguished by uncommon cheerfulness, met the grief-marked countenance and flowing eye of the husband and the father, who, mourning in secret the loss of his daughters, and of his equally endeared Laura Montalbert, feared the fatal dart was thrown to separate him from the wife of his bosom, the best friend and faithful partner of his heart.

The physicians who were called in to prescribe for Mrs. O'Byron, ordered her to Bath; and thither her husband, her son, and daughter, with Sir William, Miss Evelyn, and Clarinda, accompanied

her. Soon after their arrival at that place of fashionable resort, Mrs. O'Byron's health seemed mending, and the young people sometimes mixed in the gay circles around them. There Albany met many of his school and college companions, and Miss Evelyn encountered a multitude of old acquaintance. There too, they again saw the deserving, but unhappy Sidney Athol, wandering from scene to scene without any true relish for pleasure, gazing at the young and the beautiful with the same sort of admiration as their pictures might excite, and sighing, as the image of his lost and lovely Laura, trembling with sensibility, and covered with the blushes of Nature, recurred to his tortured mind.

The meeting between Clarinda and him was truly affecting. Athol pressed her hand to his heart with a sort of ecstacy, while he eagerly enquired for Sir William; and Clarinda timidly expressed the pleasure she felt at seeing him again, while,

as

as she spoke, the mysterious fate of Laura inflicted a pang upon her heart.

Amongst the numerous visitors attracted by Clarinda's youth and beauty; and sanctioned by their prior acquaintance with Miss Evelyn, were some who carried their admiration of the charming rustic, as she was frequently called, so far as to wish seriously to secure so fair a prize to themselves.

The most distinguished of these competitors was a tall youth, who waited impatiently for the death of a libertine father, to bind his brows with a ducal coronet, and who was so unconscious of the disadvantages of a weak understanding, a corrupt heart, and a ruined constitution, that it was evident he thought he stooped much beneath himself, and conferred a high honour on Clarinda, by offering to make her the partner of his life and future dignities. But on this subject Clarinda judged very differently.

A virtuous manly character, and an enlightened elegant companion was, in her estimation, far preferable to all the pageantry attendant on superfluous wealth and pompous titles. The warm profession of the sanguine suitor was therefore soon changed into disappointment and bitter acrimony; for nothing is so deeply felt by mean and frivolous minds as the wounds given to their vanity.

All the other admirers of Clarinda were equally unsuccessful, when, one day, Sir William informed her that Albany O'Byron was seriously attached to her, and had applied to him, to sanction the avowal of his passion; adding that it was a match he should prefer for her to any other, though still firmly determined never to oppose her inclination, or direct her choice on a point where her happiness was the most deeply interested.

Clarinda was more confused than surprised at receiving this information, as it

was

was what Albany's marked attentions to her had long taught her to expect; nor did she know what objection she could make to the proposal, although her heart was unconquerably averse to it, and she felt it impossible to return Albany's love. She therefore besought Sir William only to allow her time to consider of what he had communicated. Several days elapsed without Sir William speaking to her again on this subject; and during that time, Albany urged his suit with all the ardour of passionate attachment, but was heard with coldness and tears.

"Am I hated? Am I then hated?" he exclaimed in agony.

"No—Oh no!" cried Clarinda, alarmed by his looks and manner, and always averse to inflict pain.

"Permit me then to hope," he said, "to wait your pleasure—to live upon the blessing of beholding you—to endeavour to gain and to merit your love!"

Scarcely conscious of what she was doing, Clarinda allowed him to seize her hand, which he pressed with fervour to his lips; and from that moment he attributed her coldness and averted looks to the natural reserve of virgin modesty, and a temper extremely timid; and his eyes sparkled with the most lively hope as they parted.

Clarinda, much agitated, undetermined how to act, blaming herself for having given Albany any encouragement to indulge his passion, yet fearful of adding to the dissatisfaction occasioned in Sir William's mind by the mysterious Secret of the Cavern, was hastening to her apartment, when she met her benefactor with an open letter in his hand, which he presented to her without uttering a word; and as she took it trembling from him, her eye glanced over the paper, and she saw at the bottom the signature of Lionel Ethelwood; yet as the image of that interesting

interesting young man recurred to her mind, she thought the hand-writing did not appear like what she had seen of his; and Sir William turning suddenly from her, she hurried on with the letter to her own chamber.

CHAP. XIII.

" Full many a lady
" I've ey'd with best regard; and many a time
" The harmony of their tongues hath into bondage
" Brought my too diligent ear.
" But you, Oh you,
" So perfect, and so peerless, are created
" Of every creature's best."

THE surprise and confusion experienced by Clarinda, when Sir William presented to her the letter signed Lionel Ethelwood, was trivial, compared to what she felt, when, on perusing that letter, she found it contained a declaration of love, and a proposal

proposal of marriage, not from the youthful and enamoured Lionel, but from his so lately widowed father.

The paper dropped from Clarinda's trembling hand, and as it lay on the floor, she sat fixed to her chair with astonishment, and gazing at the letter in a sort of gloomy stupor, when a gentle tap at her chamber-door roused her from her unpleasing reverie; and Miss Evelyn entering the room, cast her eyes upon the paper, and turned pale: then resuming her accustomed ease of manner, she addressed Clarinda, and told her she was come, at the particular request of Sir William, to have some conversation with her.

While Miss Evelyn made this communication to Clarinda, the latter had taken up the paper from the floor, and secured it in her purse until she could return it to Sir William; and Miss Evelyn drawing a chair close to her, entered on the subject of her commission.

"Dear

"Dear Miss Warbert," said Miss Evelyn, pressing Clarinda's hand, "my affection for you, and Sir William's confidence in me, impel me to undertake rather a painful office."

She paused; and the deep blush upon Clarinda's cheek gave place to an unusual paleness.

"As a friend truly interested in your future happiness," resumed Miss Evelyn, "I came to console and advise with you, for I see you are not at ease within yourself; and if you will confide in me, I have no doubt but my efforts and my counsel may be of service to you. The attachment which Albany O'Byron has now declared for you, I have long been acquainted with, as I am with his uncommon merits. Such are the tenderness and ardour of his passion, that I greatly fear, if unsuccessful, it will make a melancholy and lasting impression on his mind. With Sir William's sentiments on this subject, I believe you are already acquainted; he

wishes

wishes to know your decision, not to influence your choice. If Mr. Ethelwood,"—(here Clarinda sprang from her seat, from an involuntary emotion)—"if Mr. Ethelwood," repeated Miss Evelyn, "can become a rival to the young and handsome Albany, your candour is such, that you will not keep either your lovers or your friends long in suspense, especially when you know that Sir William is anxious to learn your determination, and Mr. Ethelwood testifies as much impatience to know his fate as the most youthful suitor could evince."

A sort of sarcastic smile crossed the features of Miss Evelyn as she concluded; and Clarinda very gravely replied—

"It requires not a moment of reflection, Madam, to relieve Mr. Ethelwood from a state of uncertainty; for no consideration whatever could prevail on me to accept his offers, which greatly amaze, [illegible]nay say shock me, when I recollect his late amiable Lady, and think how

short

short a time has elapsed since her death. With respect to Albany O'Byron, whose merits I acknowledge, and whose professions seem to me to demand attention, I ask a little more time to consult my own heart ere I give a final answer."

Miss Evelyn bowed, smiling, and informed Clarinda that they were invited to a ball and supper, and hoped she would be of their party, as all the gentlemen indulged the expectation that she would favour them with her presence; and as a further inducement, she added, Sidney Athol would be there.

The society of that gentleman had always been particularly agreeable to Clarinda; and since the loss of their endeared Laura, had been more interesting than ever. In him Clarinda seemed to meet a kindred soul; and the sadness which grief and disappointment had impressed upon his mind, seemed in unison with the secret melancholy which she [illegible] prevailing over the native vivacity of her temper

temper. Clarinda therefore accompanied her companions to the ball, and danced first with Captain Athol, then with the enraptured Albany, who was more than usually gay; and concluded with giving her hand for a few dances to a young and elegant stranger, who distinguished her by his particular attention, from her first entering the room.

The high spirits and glowing language of Albany convinced Clarinda that he entertained no doubt of the success of his passion; but this observation was extremely painful to Clarinda, and she accused herself severely for having allowed him to indulge such hopes; for although she experienced a sincere friendship for Albany, she was incapable of returning his love, and listened to his ardent professions with feelings bordering on aversion.

Several days elapsed. Albany pressed his suit with fervour, and thought his conquest sure, while Clarinda shrunk from the

the irksome task of crushing at once those high-raised hopes which she was conscious her timidity had unwarily cherished; assuring herself that, averse as she always was to receive Albany's attentions, and the chilling coldness with which she heard his vows, would soon convince him of his error, without her being compelled to tell him he could never be the object of her affection. But in this she was mistaken. Albany had from the first believed his attachment returned; and though her coldness sometimes mortified him, he concluded it was the effect of her retired education and natural temper.

From this irksome situation Clarinda was in some degree relieved by the sudden departure of Albany, who informed her one morning that important affairs, which admitted of no delay, obliged him to hasten to London; and he bade her adieu with the warmest assurances of unalterable love, and the most lively hope that he should soon secure the blessing of her heart

heart and hand.—*Never! never!* stood trembling upon Clarinda's lips; but the violence of his passion deprived her of the power of utterance; and her utmost effort was necessary to disengage herself from his embrace, when a flood of tears came to her relief, which her lover attributed to concern at parting with him.

"He is gone!" cried Clarinda, as soon as she found herself alone, "and gone under a false impression that I love him! And have I then encouraged a perhaps fatal delusion?—Am I a deceiver?"

She sprang from her seat, and flew to the apartment of Sir William, resolved to open her heart to him. She could not find Sir William, but she met Miss Evelyn, who observed her agitation, and in the most soothing language invited her confidence. Clarinda accompanied Miss Evelyn to her dressing-room, and fully revealed to her the causes of her uneasiness. Miss Evelyn testified extreme surprise and concern.

"I

"I am inexpressibly grieved at what you tell me," observed that lady; "and I shudder to think what will be the consequences when Albany is informed of your aversion to him, which, indeed, I am equally surprised as concerned to hear, for, from your behaviour, both Sir William and myself certainly concluded you returned his affection; and therefore we thought it unnecessary to speak to you on the subject, which we should otherwise undoubtedly have done."

These words, together with the gravity of Miss Evelyn's manner, and the look of disapprobation which sat upon her features, struck Clarinda to the heart.

"The encouragement you have undoubtedly given," resumed Miss Evelyn in an impressive tone and manner, "will, I greatly fear, prove fatal to the future happiness of poor Albany, whose whole soul is centered in you, and whose affections are not now, I fear, to be subdued."

"I

"I never encouraged him, Madam," said Clarinda, summoning her utmost resolution, and agonized by Miss Evelyn's words and manner, and her own painful reflections. "I told him, when first he declared this unhappy passion for me, that I could not return it."

"But the next minute," returned Miss Evelyn, "you soothed the anguish of his disappointment, and taught him to cherish the most sanguine prospects of felicity."

"What, because I was alarmed at the violence of his manner and expressions, and could not be so harsh as to allow him to conclude that I hated him?" asked Clarinda warmly. "Surely, Madam, though not in my power to encourage him as a lover, there could be no reason why I should wound him as a friend, or withdraw that esteem and kindness which he had seemed to me so long entitled to, and which was become habitual with me. If this was encouragement, then I may indeed

Clarinda kissed her hand in thankfulness; and dictating what she would wish to have said to Mr. Ethelwood, Miss Evelyn flew to prove her readiness to oblige her, and quitted the apartment with a light step, and an enlivened countenance.

After waiting in her dressing-room a considerable time for the return of Miss Evelyn, that lady appeared with a melancholy look, and eyes swollen with weeping; and throwing herself into a chair, she declared she would not go through such a scene again, to be made mistress of the universe.

"Poor gentleman!" she proceeded, "my heart aches for him! If I had thought my feelings would have been so severely tried, I would not have attempted to deliver your refusal; for really it's quite shocking to see a man in such a state. He is distractedly in love with you, and I left him in such despair, that I should not

not wonder if some very melancholy consequences were to ensue."

Clarinda started; then, after musing some moments—

"What can you mean, dear Madam?" she asked. "Surely, at Mr. Ethelwood's time of life, a foolish passion for such a girl as I am, cannot be so uncontroulable as to defy the efforts of reason?"

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Evelyn with a solemn air; "Mr. Ethelwood is not so old as you may imagine. He is nearly my own age; and perhaps it is about the middle of life, when people of great sensibility, are often found to receive the most strong and lasting impressions."

Clarinda bowed as in submission to Miss Evelyn's superior knowledge and experience, though she had often heard it asserted that the follies of love were only excusable in the early periods of life; and she thought they were generally dis-

carded when the heyday of youth was over.

"I declare," cried Miss Evelyn, "I should not wonder if poor Mr. Ethelwood was so bewitched, as to commit suicide!"

"Suicide!" repeated Clarinda in the greatest alarm—"surely, dear Miss Evelyn, you cannot mean this, seriously?"

"If you had seen him, you would not be surprised at the effect produced on me," Miss Evelyn observed; "but I have spoken to Sir William on the subject, and I believe he is gone to talk to Mr. Ethelwood; for he declared at first, that he would not leave the house without speaking to you, till I told him you were indisposed."

"I am glad," said Clarinda, "that Sir William is gone to reason with him; and I dare say all will be well."

"It is very dangerous to trifle with attachment," observed Miss Evelyn; "and

Sir William will encourage no delusive hopes."

Clarinda blushed, as she thought Miss Evelyn seemed to allude to what had before passed on the subject of her conduct to Albany, in whom love and madness appeared to Clarinda less inexcusable than in Mr. Ethelwood, notwithstanding all the arguments of Miss Evelyn, whose apprehensions of suicide had, however, left a gloomy impression on Clarinda's mind; and she felt in some degree relieved when Sir William appeared, and informed them that Mr. Ethelwood had left the house more rational and tranquillized than when he entered it.

After remaining with them a considerable time, and chatting cheerfully on indifferent subjects, Sir William arose to return to his apartment; and Clarinda, bidding Miss Evelyn a good morning, resolved to speak to him alone, and fully explain to him her sentiments and conduct with respect to Albany.

Following Sir William to his chamber-door, Clarinda besought his attention for a few minutes. Sir William led her into a room, which he made his study, and seated beside him, Clarinda informed him of all she felt with regard to Albany; at which Sir William was equally astonished and concerned as Miss Evelyn had professed to be.

Clarinda explained her conduct, and Sir William observed—

"I am convinced of the purity of all your motives, my dear child. I know, too, your unwillingness to give pain to a man who adores you; and that this amiable feeling has led you into an error which I cannot but feel alarmed at; knowing, as I do, the excess of Albany's attachment, and the ardour of his nature, which make me apprehensive that from the hopes he at present thinks he has cause to cherish, his disappointment will be rendered doubly severe."

The

The colour varied quickly on Clarinda's cheek, and tears afforded some relief to her oppressed heart. Sir William pressed her to his bosom with paternal affection, endeavoured to console her, and promised to do all in his power to soften her anxiety, by making known her sentiments to Albany, and using his utmost endeavours to reconcile him to his fate.

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Literary Journal, July 1804.